

@oroni

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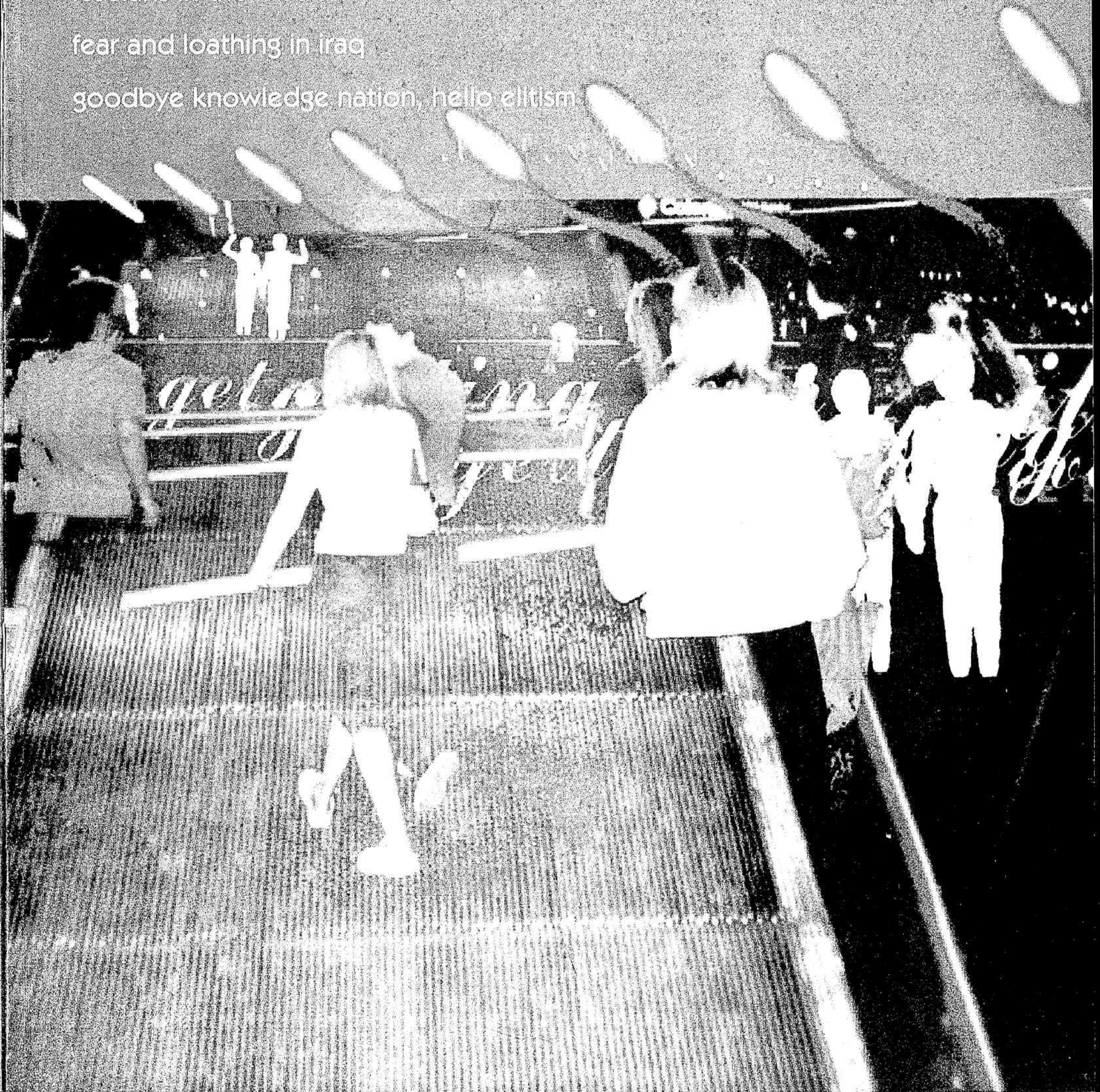
loving the scene i'm in: singledom

heading straight for religion

lesbians in the media

fear and loathing in iraq

goodbye knowledge nation, hello elitism



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no thanks to: stupid fucking fucked fuckety computers which refuse to do their job; the fluff, which, in case you haven't realised, is falling; approved systems who have liquidated and will never pay our advertising fees; people who promised us things and NEVER delivered and the ANU who had sprinklers on in the pouring rain on Friday night. that's what we want to see more of on this uni, less library books, more sprinklers in the rain. nice one.

woroni is the official publication of the anu students' association. you can contact us via phone on (02) 6248 7127, fax on (02) 6125 3967 or email at woroni_articles@anu.edu.au. you have one more issue in which to meet the 2002 team. be forewarned, however, that the bright sparkle has long left our eyes and we are but shadows of our idealistic first-issue selves. if you want to talk to the jaded hacks in person, please come and visit us in the office in the student services building near chifley library. the opinions expressed in woroni are not necessarily those of the editors or the students' association. thank fuck for that.

ethnic drumming strikes hard note

peter annesley

The "War on Terror" by the People's Republic of China in its Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has received scant attention in Australia. That distant region - its problems and people - seems far from the lives of most Australians. Tim Fischer, former Leader of the National Party, said it best when he commented that "who could have predicted that in 1996 the municipal government of the capital of Xinjiang province would become my neighbour by purchasing a farm in New South Wales?" Then again, who could have predicted that but a few years later there would be a performance in Canberra all the way from Xinjiang.

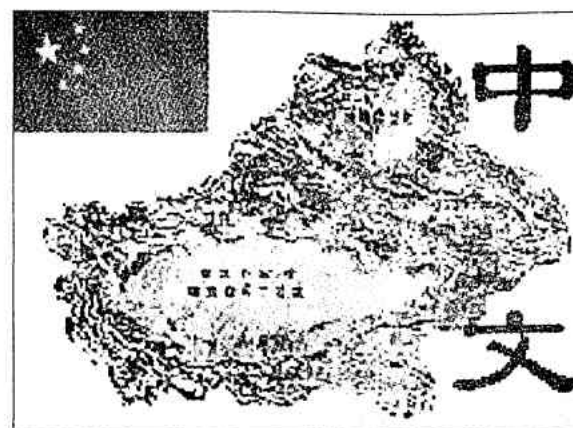
This region of north-western China makes up one-sixth of the country's area and is populated by a range of

ethnic "nationalities". The Chinese government has waged a protracted campaign, called "Strike Hard", against people in Xinjiang who are agitating for an independent state called "East Turkestan". "The fight against the Eastern Turkestan group is an important aspect of the international fight against terrorism", the Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said.

The "Strike Hard" campaign against separatism contrasts with the recent display at the Canberra Theatre on 27 September 2002 by the China Xinjiang Song & Dance Ensemble. This group was established in 1949 and has regular international performances. It showcases the artistic and cultural flair and diversity of Xinjiang's minority groups. The Ensemble's most re-

cent stage show was titled "Good Place Xinjiang".

In Canberra, they performed *the Root of the Sky* to celebrate the 53rd Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Australia. The audience was a mix of diplomats, Australian political and social luminaries, and a large contingent of Australian-Chinese. Many were wearing small pins with interlocking Chinese and Australian flags. During the performance, the songs which received the loudest applause were "The Fluttering Red Flag" and



(Above) Map of Xinjiang, in case you'd like to visit.

"Why is the Flower so Red".

In the Chinese media, East Turkestan separatists are portrayed as the recipients of funding from the Middle East, with training and combat experience in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Chechnya. One of China's most popular magazines, *Life Weekly*, ran a feature story in June titled "China's Fight against Terrorism" which targeted Afghan-trained Islamic radicals in Xinjiang as China's primary enemy. Wang Lequan, the Xinjiang communist party secretary, who visited Australia in December 2000, recently said, "The global anti-terrorism campaign has to a great extent been beneficial to our crackdown on terrorist forces... We're conducting re-education in the ideological fields to increase people's awareness so as to prevent the enemies from changing their tactics and conducting non-armed and non-violent activities."

This cooption of the rhetoric of terror to target political dissent worries human rights groups. They have documented an alarming number of arbitrary arrests and executions in Xinjiang. Dilxat Raxit, a representative of the East Turkestan Information Center, a Uighur exile group based in Sweden said, "the Chinese government knows there is no connection between Uighur activists and bin Laden, but after 9-11 it made a good excuse."

Mike Jendrzeczyk, Director of Human Rights Watch's Asia Division, called for the United States to "publicly reject China's claim that its crackdown on peaceful expression of so-called 'separatist' views is part of the war against terrorism." The increasing number of alleged human rights violations in Xinjiang means that the Chinese will continue to look for international "support and understanding".

The performance at the Canberra Theatre belies the alarming and ongoing problems in remote Xinjiang. It is ironic that Australia's relationship with China was celebrated through such a potentially embarrassing association. By naively offering "support and understanding", Australia is attached to more than a glossy cultural offering.

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daniel wheelwright

It may not be just about digging wells but the AusAID affiliated Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) program is the hands-on, shovel end of Australian government sponsored youth development initiatives. If you dream of waking to zapping mosquitoes in southern Thailand or a meal of fermented goat's cheese in central Mongolia, then you should know that applications for intake 9 of the program close on Monday 21 October, 2002. The positions available are currently up on the AusAID web-site (www.ausaid.gov.au) and there are assignments from Kiribati to Kathmandu. They are seeking motivated, committed and engaged Australian young people to make a difference in the world. Many of the positions require some sort of technical or academic qualification and the emphasis is on people with at least one or two years work experience.

The program was instigated in 1998 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, to strengthen mutual understanding between Australia and the countries of the Asia Pacific. It seeks to make a positive contribution to the region by exposing young Australians to the challenges of

living and working in a development context.

Skilled young Australians, aged 18-30, are placed on short-term assignments of between 3-12 months, in developing countries throughout the Asia Pacific region. Youth Ambassadors work with Australian organisations and their overseas counterparts in a broad range of areas including health, environment, rural development, gender, governance, justice, education and infrastructure development.

A distinctive feature of the AYAD Program is the involvement of Australian organisations and professional individuals as 'partners' in the program. Under the AYAD Partnership Program Australian companies, educational institutions, government agencies, NGOs, and community organisations nominate a young Australian for an assignment that the organisation has sourced through its own networks in the Asia Pacific region. The program then provides the administrative and financial support needed for the assignment to go ahead.

Youth Ambassadors receive a living allowance to cover accommodation and other living expenses

but do not receive a salary from the program. Applicants must be aged 18-30, be an Australian citizen, have an Australian Passport current for at least 12 months, pass a police check, be considered "fit for overseas service" by a qualified medical practitioner, and attend the one-week AYAD Pre-departure Training Program in Canberra.

Applicants must indicate a commitment to acquire language skills to enable effective participation in an assignment. They should demonstrate that they have the specific skills, knowledge, qualifications and relevant work experience specified for the assignment for which they are applying, and also demonstrate suitable personal qualities and attributes that will enable the applicant to live and work in a developing country.

Many ANU students would be qualified and it sure beats sitting in Lyneham wondering why the world is so shit. If you care about making a difference, keep the AYAD program in mind. Think of the children...and get off your ass and do something. Our government might not have much going for it but the AYAD program is certainly better than a slap in the face with a cold salami.

in brief

nymphus 2000

September reports in the New York Post and the Toronto Star, quoting parents' Web site "reviews" of the Mattel \$19.99 Nimbus 2000 plastic-replica broomstick from the latest Harry Potter movie, highlighted its battery-powered special effect: vibration. Wrote one Texas mother, "I was surprised at how long [my daughter and her friends] can just sit in her room and play with this magic broomstick." Another said her daughter fights her son for it but complains that "the batteries drain too fast." A New Jersey mother, sensing a problem, said her daughter could keep playing with it, "but with the batteries removed." Another mother, aged 32, said she enjoyed it as much as her daughter.

if it's young day, this must be Turkmenistan Turkmenistan's president Saparmurat Niyazov made two decrees five days apart in August, first changing the names of the seven days of the week and the twelve months of the year, e.g., April became "Gurbansoltan- edzhe" (the name of Niyazov's mother), and Tuesday became "Young Day." In the second decree, 12-year life cycles were created, beginning with "childhood," "adolescence" (up to age 25), on up to "wise" (age 73 to 85) and "old" (to 97).

23,720/144,000 ain't that bad

Former Jehovah's Witness elder, Bill Bowen, said in June that the sect manages a secret database of 23,720 members who have been accused of sexual abuse, but that little if anything happens to those named unless a witness comes forward, a stipulation supposedly commanded by Deuteronomy 19:15, requiring witnesses to prove a sin. When Bowen complained, he was expelled from the sect for "causing divisions." Furthermore, Bowen said that even confessed abusers are "punished" only by being kept from proselytising door-to-door unless accompanied by another Witness.

youth minister to minister

renee smith-lawson

Many Canberra young people, when they're not at the Phoenix gettin' social or gettin' arrested outside Bobby McGees, spend their time complaining about youth representation. It's a common gripe:

that the adults don't care about kids. The youth of this city are blamed for graffiti and for stealing shopping trolleys. They get a bad rap for their propensity for big hair and even bigger spoilers. If they're out of work they're called lazy and if they're at University they're branded as yuppie scum. They can't win, but there is a glimmer of hope...



(Above) Less fighting, more singing for Canberra's Youth

He sees the Youth Council as "being a forum for more direct representation of youth perspectives". He enthused that "the Minister hasn't actually placed an agenda in front of us yet so young people are setting the terms! It's very exciting."

The process for selection will be started again in 2003. Councilors will be engaged for two year terms. It

is proposed that there be a roll-over period when there are people from the "old" and "new" Councils working together.

It is an exciting opportunity for young people to make themselves heard in a serious Territory level forum. The Council is organising a Youth InterACT Conference at the CSIRO Discovery Centre on October 18 and 19. Interested youth are invited to register for this free event by calling Stacey Wilkinson on 6205 0632.

The newly established Minister's Youth Council is one of several initiatives under the umbrella of Youth InterACT. The Youth Council has members aged 12-25. Liam Hunt, a member of the Youth Council, said, "There are 68,000 Canberrans in that age bracket and the Council is a way of giving them a greater say in the community."

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implicit facism the rantor

What does it say about the Australian collective psyche that our parking tickets are little white strips of paper covered 99 per cent in illegibly small font with ways to pay a fine and 1 per cent of even smaller font buried impossibly in the mass, left to describe one's blatant lack of options for dispute? What bothers me even more is that no one seems to care, so completely desensitised to this implicit facism have we become. And implicit facism IS what it has become, because since when in a

decent democracy is one assumed guilty before proven innocent? I would argue that in a properly functioning democracy the parking ticket would be covered in 1 per cent fine 80 per cent avenues for dispute and 20 per cent apology for causing obvious distress, edging you that much closer to an already overcrowded hospital system that will be at pains to provide you with proper care (but that's another rant) and for just generally insulting your common decency. The fact that you might have had to get change for the machine, because it doesn't accept notes or bankcards is supposedly irrelevant, along with all the other reasonable possibilities as to why a car in a car park doesn't have a parking permit. Then there is the question of why parking inspectors are so quick to fine. I'm not sure how they get to cars so quickly...you never see them around and yet five minutes is all it takes. One is forced to wonder if there aren't hidden cameras somewhere... Moreover, it seems blindingly obvious that the authorities sanction placing said parking tickets in brash yellow envelopes so that they can easily be spied from across a crowded carpark, inflicting maximum retribution on the unwitting victims as they are forced to behold the abominations for the full walk back to the car. And as if this wasn't already a strong enough indication of the government's blatant lack of care for its citizens, the standard line from the "seemingly" helpful lady at the end of the telephone is that there is nothing to be done but pay the money, write a letter and wait, no doubt for a response that the parking inspector has fined you well within the mandate of Article 2C of the Traffic Act and that in essence you have no leg to stand on should you wish to pursue the matter in court. Finally, it shouldn't be neglected that the fine is obscenely high for the "offense". This is no doubt to subsidise the increasing incidence of heart disease caused by unnecessary exposure to state sanctioned stress.

Consider France as an example of a decent system, where a parking ticket is covered more by ways to dispute the claim than by ways to pay it. It is also a lot less expensive, and at the end of the day there is no real expectation to pay the ticket. It is more by way of letting the individual know that they might have over stepped the bounds of common decency, than that of a reprimand.

Still, the Orwellian state that we are becoming so used to is not restricted

to parking fines. Quite the contrary. Fascist boxes, as I like to call them but which are more commonly known as red light and speeding cameras, are on the rise. What do they achieve? Reduction in the number of accidents, decrease in road based fatalities? I don't think so...I want to see the facts! We all should, but the authorities won't be divulging them anytime soon, because it shows up how much taxpayers money is wasted on flippancy. It is supposedly helping put more police on the beat to fight crime. But that's a furry, since every red light camera in Canberra needs a mobile unit to back it up once in a while to stop drivers doing the speed limit for the camera but accelerating without fear of being stopped there after.



Even more ridiculous is the fact that the red light cameras are programmed to take a picture with a certain delay after the light has turned red, so that it is still possible to run a red light with impunity by negotiating it after the camera has flashed. I have observed intrepid motorists doing this on many occasions and I have no doubt that the hideous accidents that still occur are as a result of this sort of behaviour...

This problem is heightened by the increasing numbers of "spawn of Satan" traffic lights, that have been sprouting up in places they are not needed. All this can do is increase the stress of motorists, make them more susceptible to taking risks and just generally ruin their health.

The newly introduced 50km per hour zones are yet another cynical attempt by government to reduce Canberra's embarrassingly high life expectancy for both men (the highest in the world) and women. What happened to better judgment? Is it really a crime to do 60km per hour in a 50km per hour zone, in the middle of the night, when one is in total control of self, vehicle and situation? Sure, I hear you say, but what about the irresponsible drivers, the ones that do 100km per hour whilst drunk? The police should be more prepared to assess a situation for what it is. Humans have a more evolved ability for perception and reasoning than a computer, so why not use it?

But there is a bigger issue here, namely my concern about our nation's wanting better judgment. In acts of what can only be seen as abject insecurity, we are abdicating our proper sense of fairness to a skewed interpretation of justice. Are we becoming a country of spineless yes-men-and-women, unwilling to question the rules of our leaders? Should Australian's still be allowed to claim the legendary larkin streak as its own? Those little white strips of paper are not just an unfair way of extracting yet more money from our post-tax incomes, they are an expression of Australia's sense of social order. Should we stand for it? Rantor says no.

divine revelation daniel emyln-jones

Religions have always had a problem with gay people. Archbishop Pell's denial this year of communion to openly gay people in St. Mary's Roman Catholic cathedral in Sydney has been a classic example of this problem.

In my view the kind of ecclesiastical homophobia shown by Church-leaders such as Archbishop Pell has potential to be far more destructive than homophobia from any other source. At least when secular society or individuals show prejudice then in the end it's just individuals. A religious denomination such as the Roman Catholic Church claims its authority is given by God. What the Vatican says is therefore in effect also what God says. When the Vatican condemns a believer, then it is God, not individuals who condemn. For a gay believer who is celibate this means firstly accepting that you are suffering from a disorder or a perversion and are not a part of God's creation. If you are a gay believer and you are in a sexual relationship this means also accepting that you are in a state of mortal sin and destined for the fires of hell. Sexuality is of course an important component of personality, whether gay or straight, celibate or non-celibate. This condemnation isn't therefore exactly a recipe for high self-esteem or psychological health. Indeed, the terrible toll of such teachings over the centuries can only be guessed at. Even for gay people who leave the church, feelings of guilt and deep-seated feelings of being somehow "wrong" can remain.

Given that religion, and our concept of the divine is so important I think it is worth considering why such teachings must be wrong. I'm no theologian but I think one has to be fairly naive to believe that scripture is all the undiluted word of God.

Scriptures are strongly influenced by the historical mindsets of their authors and as a consequence contain much vagueness and contradiction.

Even then there is plenty of room for alternative interpretations (one has only to compare a Christian denomination such as Roman Catholicism with Pentecostalism to realise how different such interpretations can be). Indeed, for many religions the basic message of love and peace embodied in scripture has been horribly disfigured into terror and bloodshed. I find it difficult, having read the Gospels, to see where the behaviour of the Roman Catholic Church fits into the message of peace and love preached by Jesus. Indeed, I think such behaviour is more reminiscent of the Pharisees, the dogmatic and hypocritical priests whom Jesus fought.

One of the problems with the teachings of Roman Catholicism is that

because they are perceived to be absolute truth, they cannot change, or at least can only change very slowly. Whilst some Christian denominations now accept loving and monogamous same-sex relationships, Roman Catholicism remains largely a stagnant, pharisaic, medieval political institution.



I personally don't see divine revelation as being fixed at some point in the past, recorded in scripture and tied up in tortuous knots of intellectual barbed wire. I see divine revelation as happening all the time, in individuals and in society. I see the progress of all facets of our existence: science and art, music and politics as being an integral part of divine revelation.

Certainly there is much evidence to suggest that homosexuality can be a natural phenomenon; for example there have been many documented cases of animal homosexuality. I'm no evolutionary biologist but there are many possible reasons why homosexuality would have evolved. After all, evolution by natural selection is not simply about the selection of the fittest individuals but also about the selection of the fittest groups. Any attribute that confers an advantage to a group would be selected for and carried within that group. Perhaps gay people have a role selected for by evolution within the human community as a whole?

It is the duty of religion in the 21st century to learn and adapt as our race and our society learns more about itself and more about the world around us. It was in 1632 that the scientist Galileo Galilei was "vehemently suspected of heresy" by the Roman

Catholic Church for suggesting that the earth and planets orbited around the sun. It was in 1992 that a tentative apology was finally issued by the Vatican. The cost to humanity and to civilisation would be much improved if this process of learning, particularly with regard to gay people could be speeded up.

I say this not to attack religion. I say it because I believe that religion in its purest form is one of the most valuable things we have and that EVERYONE has an absolute right to a personal and loving relationship with their creator.



young libs rule OK matthew "muzza" baddlington

I might be a Young Liberal, but I'm a great guy. No really, I am. Ask anyone who was at the Annual Convention in August, ask any of the lads from the Rural and Regional Young People's Issues Forum Committee, ask the gang from Young Liberals for Sensible Native Title Legislation. They'll say "yeah, Matt's busting with ideological conviction. Why, he's as full of zest as any young conservative I've seen — but what of it?", they'll say. "He's a nice guy! He's great! He's a laugh to be around, he knows how to put people at ease — he's a hit with the ladies and kind to his mother. Muzza? Top bloke! My oath! A real battler! Always thinking of the kiddies. Yes, he's the salt of the earth alright". That's what they'll say, and they're right.



So why do you long-haired conspiracy theorists hate me so? Have I ever wronged you? No! I wish you no harm! I wish only knowledge and happiness for you! If you would give me a chance to prove myself, you'd see how good a friend I could be to you. But will you extend a friendly hand to me? No. You will not heed me. You taunt me, you mock and tease me. I am beaten down, crushed, jostled and laughed at. You — I am not afraid to say it, friend — you *Other* me.

Oh yes, I am familiar with De Beauvoir's radical philosophy. I am familiar with the great thinkers of many eras. You think I have no critical basis for my unpopular views on political economy? You could not be more wrong. I have devoted myself to a torturous regime of private study to improve my mind. I have spent years bent over dusty tomes, quill nib pen in hand. I have paced back and forth for nights on end, wrestling with difficult questions of human freedom. I have returned on cold winter nights to digs alone, my brow furrowed in intense concentration. I have devoted myself to the solitary pleasures of philosophy and it is only after long thought that I have concluded this: open markets and plural democracy ensure the greatest possible human happiness.

But you wild children of Keynesian passion, you spitters-on-the-market and you devil-may-care Fabians, you would turn your collective back on all this. You would throw the works of Shakespeare, *The Guardian* newspaper and the thrust and riposte of political debate to the wind. You would tear end from end the proud history of trade and commerce to which you are heir. Whither then would you turn to procure your exotic Indian spices, your Turkish hasheesh and your obscure mail-order vinyl?

You would not have them, friend. *Simply could not get them.* You would have to milk

your own Tabasco plants and get high on your own supply. And then who would keep the wheels of industry turning? Eh?

Why must you reject so bitterly what is obviously true? If you insist on supporting the cause of organized labour, if you insist on meddling with the market's natural equilibrium, you will bring civilization as we know it to its knees. Will you be happy then? No, then you will be miserable. Your new world will not be the playlunch of drumming circles, May Day rallies, chai tents and ALP women's caucus luncheons you imagine. Have you never read *Animal Farm*? Unfamiliar with the Gulags? A stranger to the 'former USSR'? That's right — *former*, as in failed, as in flawed, as in does not work, as in should not be tried again. Why do you glorify

the hopeless life of Eastern Europeans forced to wear strangely-tapered State-issue jeans, scratchy underwear and hessian sacks on their heads? The mad experiment of collectivism is over. Give up the ghost, buy Gucci and get on with your life.

You should not hate me on account of my being chosen as the prophet of my generation. My task — to come before you as a stranger in the night and take the blindfold from your eyes — is not an easy one. Would you turn from the ghost of Adam Smith? Would you walk by if John Stuart Mill requested from you a match for his pipe? Would you not respond if Jeremy Bentham doffed his hat at you and winked, a jolly twinkle in his eye? Surely not. But me you heap with scorn. When you are come into your full wisdom, you will weep and gnash your teeth with shame.

If you continue on your willful path you will curse us all to a new dark age of repressive world government and womanly capital trapped under a firm regulatory thumb. Would you have this be your legacy to the world?

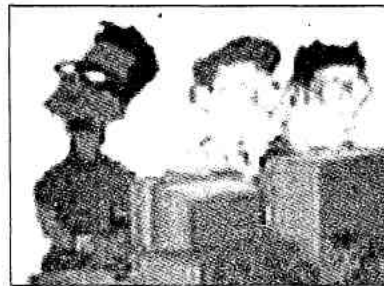
Please, for your sake and mine, do the Right Thing! Leave the market to sort the wheat from society's chaff. Concentrate on looking after Number One and leave the rest to me. Contact the Young Liberals Welcoming Committee at youngguns@hotmail.com today for your copies of our publications for 'newbies': *Neoliberalism: What's in it for an Ug Like Me?* and, for the ladies, *Do-Right Woman: Why You Don't Need Maternity Leave, Equal Pay or The Right to A Conscience Vote in the ACT?*



rote learn this! ray pavlov

A university education is about learning how to think. The teaching methodology of the Commerce Faculty ensures that its graduates are in no danger of being able to do this. Maybe it's symptomatic of the dull subject area or maybe it's symptomatic of the Accounting Profession but I would prefer to say that poor teaching methodology and course structure has destroyed the hopes I had when entering the faculty.

To begin with, the faculty routinely insults the calibre of its students by forcing them to rote learn text books for examinations. Accounting is based on a body of knowledge (AASBs) but this does not require rote learning of that knowledge. A more useful way to teach accounting would be to teach its students



how to reference and apply AASBs to accounting problems. This is the 'open book' approach that the Law Faculty took a long time ago. It is an acknowledgement that in the 'real world' it is a more useful skill to be able to research, understand and apply knowledge than it is to recite a quote from a textbook verbatim. No employer really expects to obtain graduates with specific knowledge anyway — all that comes from training on the job. Employers seek clever students, but faculty assessment policies do little to achieve this. Every accounting examination I have had since first year has asked the same question: "Are you capable of rote learning a textbook?" I'm sick of answering that question and who cares anyway?

Another concern is that many faculty lecturers read the textbook out to the class in what they think is an effort to teach. Rarely is it worthwhile attending classes because reading the book yourself is quicker and more interesting. Attending tutes is pointless from the point of view of education but the faculty makes them compulsory so that they actually get attendance. This is a really childish approach to the problem. In law the tutes are optional but everyone goes because they are useful. If commerce made their tutes useful, then attendance would similarly increase.

A better approach to the teaching of accounting at the ANU would be to hand out the expected knowledge at the start of classes and spend the rest of the time exploring contemporary accounting issues in some depth. For example, couldn't the classes be spent applying principles to accounting problems and then examinations could complement this by testing how well students comprehend and apply accounting standards?

Much of the assessment out of class for the faculty is mundane and does not require any serious academic research. For example, in a business information systems unit I once took

there was a question that asked you to apply a principle to a particular aspect of a problem. This was challenging the first time. The next four questions asked that the same principle be applied to four similar aspects of a problem. There was nothing challenging about the rest of the question. It was a highly repetitive and pointless assessment and I'm sure no one learnt anything from it. Lecturers should set short but intellectually and academically challenging rather than long and repetitive questions. As it stands many

students are able to fudge a good mark through having a nice looking report rather than seriously understanding any academic matter.

Group work is a good idea generally but much of the work that I have done takes up too

much time compared to its value. Not that I want my group work to be highly assessed because I have no control over who I get to work with and most lecturers couldn't care less if someone in my group is lazy. What I would like to see is that group assignments that require a more reasonable amount of work and hopefully (just hopefully) a more challenging intellectual level of argument.

On the course structure, the Faculty should make an effort to teach ethics, accounting development and history in first year accounting. The aim of this would be to allow a basis for students having independent thought about the concepts, controversies and future possibilities for the profession. Other professional courses see it as essential that students are taught in this way from the start. In the commerce faculty there is a brief two week introduction to these concepts and then an optional later year unit at the end of the degree. This is just another symptom of a faculty that does not train thinkers but merely tries to implant mindless drones with the knowledge they need to be a cog in the economic machinery.

"Quantative Methods for Business and Economics" should be made optional for anyone who did three unit maths or higher at high school. This university course is just repetition for such students. I asked for exemption in first year and was not allowed. This meant that I wasted \$700 in HECS and/or the opportunity cost of an elective. The only distinctiveness of this course for me was that the subject matter didn't even have the potential to teach me anything.

In conclusion there should be a deep introspection in the ANU Commerce Faculty about how to change its methodology to actually train thinkers not drones. If nothing is done then the ANU will continue to short change its students and lose the opportunity to advance real cleverness in the Australian Accounting Profession.

joke's on us

Just a quick response to my own letter which YOU entitled 'Ok guys, is this some kind of stupid joke?'. You know what pisses me right off? People who whinge n' bitch n' moan about people who whinge n' bitch n' moan about them, and then call the people who give them some supposedly well-deserved recognition and praise 'stupid'!

Well fuck you, you bunch of Supercilious Cunts (and let me tell you, that title is reserved for a very privileged few). The truth is, I don't even go to your stupid university, I was just reading your stupid paper because I genuinely think it's quality. My own small, underfunded and dysfunctional university doesn't even have enough money to warrant a student publication at all! Be thankful for what you have and accept gratuitous fucking praise when it's heaped on you, you stupid fucking ungrateful wankers.

Nicola .H.

P.S: I thought your Strine bit on the dead midget from Passions was excessively offensive. So there.

P.P.S: I still love you, Matilda! we played 'what's your favourite kitchen utensil' for 9 hours on my last road trip between 'Berra and Coffs Harbour. It's amazing how many people hugely enjoy the 'spork'...

the doctor is in...sane

Dear Sir/Madam

Bulk-billing GP's see many people with a history of being sexually abused in childhood.

I have seen hundreds. Only ONE ever told me the offender was a priest or church employee. This is the kind of perspective which our media love to distort.

Yours sincerely

Arnold Jago

pyschlist

(1) ACT Police Minister Ted Quinlan has ordered a 2-week police blitz on bicycle-riders, from August 26 to September 9. Police are issuing Traffic Infringement Notices to bicycle-riders. These are the same notices issued to Motor Vehicle drivers, and, on the back, threaten loss of Motor Vehicle Licence - for non-payment of a bicycle-riding fine.

How many of these infringement notices have been issued, and for howmany dollars in total?

(2) After riding a bicycle for over 30 years, I was booked in Civic recently for "not wearing a helmet".

At the time, I was riding my bicycle on the pavement, not on the road, and was wearing a special padded hat that straps under my chin, and which protects my ears from the cold winds off the snow. I pointed out to the officer that I wear a normal helmet in the warmer weather, but, having had recurrent ear infections, must wear this special hat in winter. This made no

RUPERT AND CORNELIUS GO NUTS No. 1 Why? Does it get any better than this?



Sharelessly ripped off this issue: Red Meat, Seinfeld, the Coon Brothers. So sue me, bitches. 21/02/2002

difference to him: citing a recent "Operational Order", he issued me with an Infringement Notice and a fine of \$45.

Only the honest get caught. If I had given a false name & address, I would have escaped the fine. Will cyclists be forced to carry Identity Papers next?

I have now obtained a letter from my GP confirming my ear infection problem, and intend to continue riding my bicycle, wearing the same hat in the cold weather, and carrying that letter with me. Riding a bicycle has become an act of defiance against arbitrary authority.

(3) A bicycle helmet is just a bit of plastic; it's no more protection than my padded hat. In fact, I bought my padded hat in Western China, which has hundreds of millions of bicycle riders, more than anywhere else in the world, and in Northern & Western China all the bicycle-riders wear these hats in winter.

(4) The ACT Greens, and Pedal Power, support Ted Quinlan's blitz on bicycle-riders. Pedal Power, representing the cyclists who wear "hotpants", has called for blitzes against the ordinary back-streets cyclists, such as university students. The Greens are showing their authoritarian streak.

(5) To be consistent, Ted Quinlan and the Greens should also extend their crackdown to Skateboard-riders (on footpaths and roads), and disabled drivers of electric vehicles on footpaths and roads.

(6) In addition, I wish to lodge a complaint against the issuing Police Officer, Member No. 2918. The officer was riding a BMW motor-bike, registration number 56-416. He commenced his questioning of me with the question, "How's your day been?", and repeated this several times during the interview. Given that he was booking me, this taunt was a mockery of friendship, an abuse of power which I resented. He also proffered his hand to shake hands with me, this after booking me despite my explanation of the health reason. I did shake his hand, registering my complaint. I have never encountered such actions with another police officer. Has this officer treated other cyclists this way?

Have the police become highwaymen, muggers of the public, after every dollar they can get?

Peter Myers

baby foot in mouth

Dear Woroni,

In response to Robert DeViera's letter in the August issue of Woroni, we would like to own up as those responsible for placing the posters of baby feet around the university. Specifically,

we would like to defend ourselves against the criticisms made of our actions.

We would firstly like to offer our sincere apologies if the posters did in fact cause "disgust", "turmoil", "personal emotional repercussions", or "suffering", to anybody who has lost, or has been affected by the loss of an unborn baby, whether through abortion or miscarriage.

We must stress, however, that suffering and "guilty and bad" feelings were not the intended effect of the posters. The intended effect was to make a simple factual statement about the development of the unborn child in light of the legislative debates current at the time. The "little feet" picture is a well known and widely used icon in the international pro-life movement, and the accompanying statement "Choose Life" was chosen specifically because it was a positive message that was non-judgmental in nature.

Much more could be said in defence against the accusations of our having evil motives, enjoying making others suffer, selfishly abusing our right of free speech and against Robert's command to "stay away from my university". But this should not be an opportunity for mudslinging. We would prefer, instead, simply to have this short defence published, and to renew our commitment "and the commitment of many others on campus" to the protection of life at all its stages.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Kwok and Anna Hoffmann

the ice-man cometh

Last month's *Woroni* tried to nail some of the ANU's more self-confident campus icons. Like all such critiques it missed the mark. You see, being a student Liberal is much like being a refrigerator. People don't really need you. In fact, they did well enough when they just had ice-chests or when they killed their prey and ate it fresh! The thing is, these days everybody thinks they need a refrigerator. Who can go without yogo, or three kinds of cheese, or those delicious salami off-cuts? Everybody needs a fridge. Water-tight enough for ya?

So, when it comes to fridges we should all think Liberal students. They might change their names occasionally (like that time Westinghouse experimented with the name "Coolator") but they remain Liberal to the core. The problem with Westinghouse's ill-fated "re-branding" was that everybody (even small children) saw through it. They might have been dazzled by the new colours and the smartly dressed sales assistants but they saw a fridge for a fridge.

If you're confused, don't be. A fridge is a fridge, a Liberal is a fridge. We don't need either of them. Coolator, my ass! Stop re-branding and give me back my freakin' ice-chest!

Frosty the Snow Commentator

usa a-ok!

Dear *Woroni*,

I was very disappointed to learn that the Young Liberals, aka "USA", failed in their bid to become next year's *Woroni* editors. I was looking forward to a student magazine that truly focussed on students instead of trendy, little "l" liberal causes like women's "right" to education and so on. In fact, I was very excited about the possibility that *Woroni* might publish some of my own previously unappreciated features, such as "Thatcher was a right-on chick", "Why economic rationalism kicks arse", and "Howard and Costello: can they do no wrong?" Tell me students wouldn't race to pick up a double-page centrefold of our beloved Iron Maiden, for instance! That's what ANU students have been begging for in their student magazine for years.

Some argued that a political group that supports Voluntary Student Unionism running a publication largely funded by compulsory student contributions was too deliciously ironic to ever actually happen. I prefer to think it is simply an idea whose time has not yet come. Chin up, "USA." When we declare war on Iraq, we'll conscript those peacenik student journalists. Then *Woroni* will be the Liberal party mouthpiece this campus so sorely needs.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Abbott's biggest fan.

it looks like it's on for young and old! congratulations to nicola h for winning this month's splendid book prize! if you would like to be immortalised in the last ever woroni for 2002 you'd better get writing! send your letters to woroni_articles@student.anu.edu.au. you may be rewarded with maria quinn's between clean sheets. a valuable addition to any library.





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 **DEFENCE GRADUATE PROGRAM.**

fear and loathing in iraq



american warmongering has reached an all time high. claiming that weapons inspections are futile, the us is ready, waiting and poised to make saddam hussein see the light. how hypocritical and costly will this exercise be? **miranda tetlow reports.**

When SatireWire.com quipped that the Bush administration intended to wage more wars as a means to teach ignorant, parochial American high school students geography, they may have just hit the mark. Unfortunately, this sentiment is also arguably applicable to the wider American population, and highlights the present political climate in the United States. In an exercise of military muscle flexing almost unprecedented since the Cold War and arguably the Cuban missile crisis, the United States has been talking (and acting) tough in their newest version of the "war on terror" supposedly precipitated by the events of September 11.

Iraq has been articulated as a major site for American attention and concern for decades, although more recently specified along with Iran and North Korea in the infamous 'Axis of evil' address on 29 January this year. The fact that America has been intimately and cooperatively involved with Saddam's regime over the last two decades has been, however, largely omitted in this and other Presidential speeches on the Iraq situation. In this vein it is particularly ironic to see Iraq targeted as a region for American wrath for many reasons. The CIA

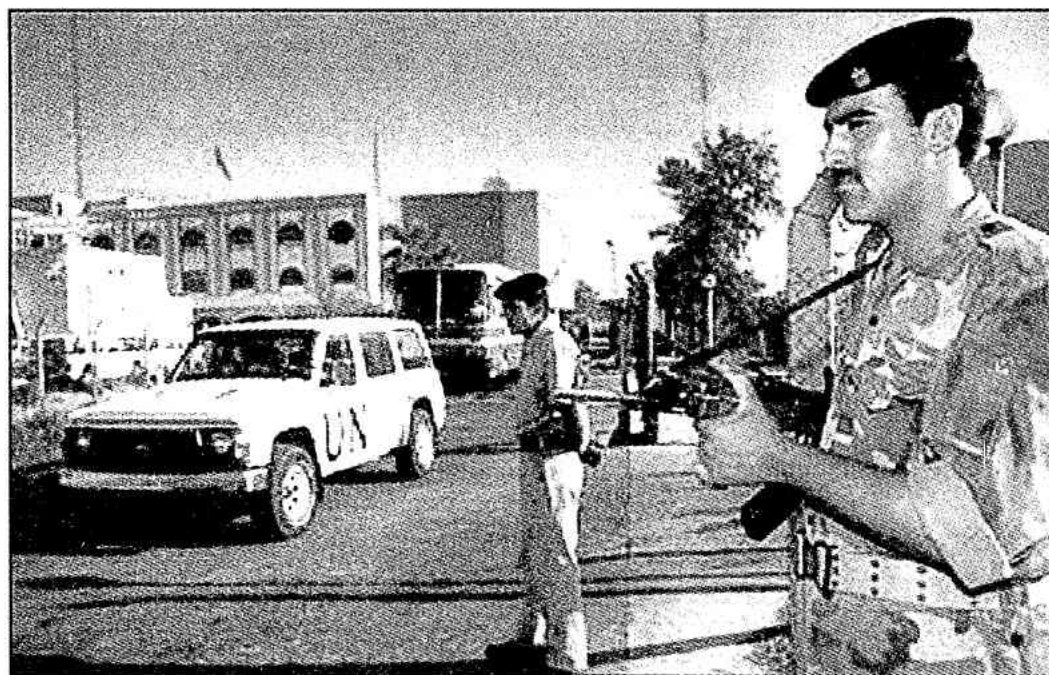


played an enormous role in engineering the 1963 coup which brought the Ba'ath Party to power—the same organisation that produced Secretary General Al Saleh Sa'adi, who in turn established the reign of terror that spawned Saddam Hussein. The US also gave both tacit and explicit encouragement, financial aid and strategic assistance to Iraq in their war with Iran, as well as protection for Saddam against internal coups in the 1980s. In 1992, a Congressional inquiry found that Bush Snr and his advisers had ordered staff to conceal their secret support for Saddam in this period, and the illegal arms shipments and military technology sent to Iraq via third countries like South Africa and Chile. The US Commerce department were instructed to delete the records of these transactions. In fact, the CIA was still feeding intelligence to Baghdad within weeks of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. During the Gulf War in 1991, Bush Snr encouraged the Iraqi people to displace Saddam's totalitarian regime, and in Basra and South Iraq this was achieved to the extent that Hussein's rule collapsed in these regions. When Wash-

ington realised that the rebels might establish a pro-Iran administration antithetical to American plans for the region, they immediately withdrew support for these anti-regime factions, denied them shelter and gave Hussein's guards safe passage through US lines in order to attack the rebels.

The time honoured platitude that hypocrisy is nothing new to American foreign policy still stands. For all America's strident condemnation of the failure of weapons inspections in Iraq, America spends more on defence than any other country in the world, with a figure of \$329 billion in 2002, set to rise to \$400 billion.

The US military is more than 250 per cent larger than the combined forces of the next nine countries on the list (Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Sudan and Cuba). While Iraq does make the "top ten", the American military capacity makes all other nations paltry in comparison. Blair and Bush criticise the weapons inspections process in Iraq, yet they both claim that their own nuclear weapon supplies are essential to national security, and former head of the Iraqi weapons inspection team, Richard Butler, has been one of many to point out this blatant double standard. Britain is also far from innocent in Iraq's arms accumulation, with the Thatcher government placing particular emphasis on ties with Iraq and certainly turning a blind eye, if not assisting, the export of weapons, chemical and biological warfare technology from British companies like Astra and British Aerospace. In terms of adhering to UN commitments and

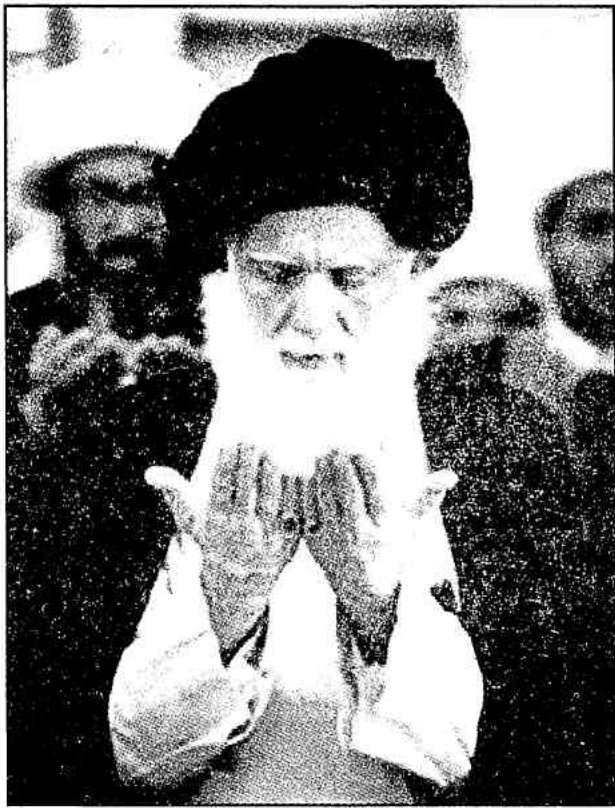


responsibilities, the Bush administration is yet to join the list of signatories on documents like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty despite coercing other nations to sign this and other treaties on disarmament. After a couple of months of diplomatic talks with Putin in Russia, Bush abandoned the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty to develop his own missile defence shield. In Janu-

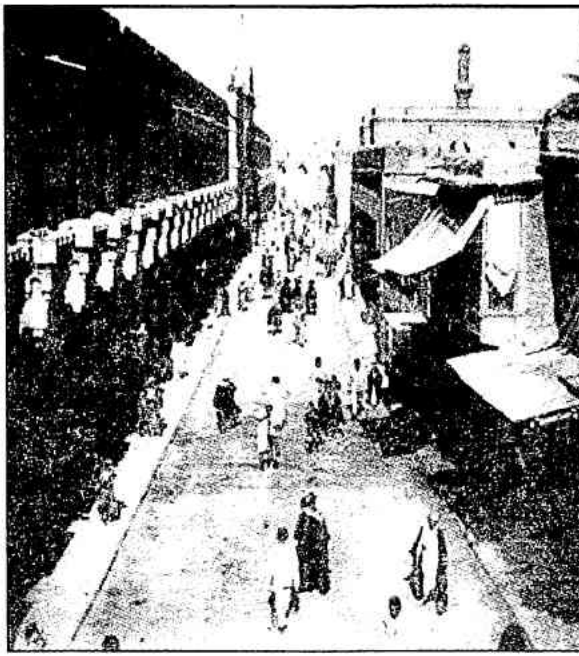
ary this year, having agreed with Russia to reduce their nuclear arsenal, America failed to dismantle warheads, placing them in storage instead. The US has opposed the establishment of an International Criminal Court, fearing repercussions for their own nationals involved in military manoeuvres and massacres. America also spends a smaller percentage of their gross national product (GNP) on foreign aid than any other developed country, and at 0.01 per cent, most other nations double this.

Yet the US still asserts itself, as perhaps even Saddam himself argues, as "policeman, prosecutor, judge and executioner." The US, supported by Blair's Government in Britain,





concealment, stalling and forgery of documents, these UN endorsed programs are still of enormous importance in upholding the credibility of international law and its subsidiary organisations. While UN principles are often not backed up in practice, it is still capable of producing success stories, and for this reason it is of utmost importance that the UN is not usurped by the United States.



the hypothetical context of an assassination of Saddam, and Bush's revenge steeped descriptions of Saddam as "the guy who tried to kill my Dad". America has already been bombing radar stations in "no-fly" zones over Iraq, in contravention of either UN Resolution 687 or 688. Self congratulatory comments like that made by



National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice are also not making America any more popular in the world playground:

"The US is a very special country in that when we maintain this position of military strength as we do now, we do it in support of a balance of power that favours freedom."



has demonstrated willingness to go it alone if the UN does not comply with its draft resolution on Iraq, which involves conditions which would allow "a UN member to use "all necessary means" should Baghdad violate requirements that include a seven day deadline for Iraq to accept demands and a 30 day deadline for Iraq to declare all weapons of mass destruction. The other members of the Security Council, Russia, China and France, have been joined by Germany in renouncing, or at least expressing, extreme reluctance to use force as an answer to the problem, particularly in light of breakthroughs in Vienna between Iraqi and UN weapons inspection spokespeople. However, these objecting Security Council members have been also been exposed as opportunists on par with the US, arranging for the exchange of (military and oil) industry into their hands in a post sanctions/post Saddam Iraq.



In February 2000, *The New York Times* disclosed that the CIA had no evidence that Iraq had engaged in terrorist operations against the US in a decade, and despite Donald Rumsfeld's claims that Iraq is linked to Al Qaeda, the evidence, at best, is inconclusive and largely relies on a meeting between one of the September 11 leaders Mohammed Atta, and an Iraqi intelligence official in Prague, June 2000. In fact, 15 of the 19 suspected/confirmed leaders in the attacks on the twin towers hailed from Saudi Arabia, one of the US's primary bastions of support in the Middle East. The repercussions for this region, and indeed Israel with their extensive military operations

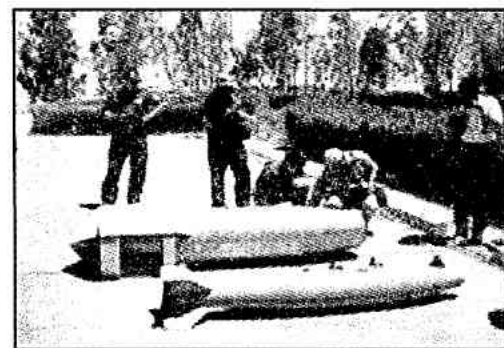
The American vision for a post war Iraq is also inadequate and simplistic. Contrary to glib American promises that military action would be quick and decisive, Iraqi Deputy Leader Tariq Aziz has declared that the war would be a "fierce fight, where America will suffer losses that have not been sustained for decades". Academics like Ross Babbage have rightly pointed out that invasion will create a generation of

Hans Blixen, one of the current weapons inspection leaders curtly stated that he would take orders from the UN, not the US. The Blair Dossier has been claimed to grossly over exaggerate the remaining weapons and military capacity of Iraq. Many of the ingredients necessary to make chemical weapons are also used in agricultural, medical and industrial supplies, and while there is little doubt that Saddam's military arsenal is extensive and includes excessive quantities of these substances for such domestic use, the proof is far from conclusive, and arguably does not warrant the extreme step of military intervention. And while experts have accepted Blair's statement that Saddam could instigate chemical warfare in 45 minutes, they

state that this is generally applicable and that it was a time frame cited in the dossier to inflame public opinion. While America, Britain and Australia point to the weapons inspections process as one largely obfuscated and made ineffective by Iraqi

state that this is generally applicable and that it was a time frame cited in the dossier to inflame public opinion. While America, Britain and Australia point to the weapons inspections process as one largely obfuscated and made ineffective by Iraqi

Previously, even if their actions failed to match their words, American rhetoric reflected at least a vague desire to maintain world equilibrium, if nothing else. In the recent situation with Iraq, comments from both Bush and other senior White House officials have been outrageously provocative, with Ari Fleischer's comment about "the cost of one bullet from the Iraqi people" in



radical and highly politicised young people, ripe for the picking of fundamentalist terrorist organisations, particularly if no solution is reached on the Israel/Palestine problem. Fundamentalist organisations will also continue to increase their profile in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, which have strong Muslim communi-





ties. The likely regional instability that would follow conflict between Iraq and American led forces has prompted several joint statements from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, which reiterate the need to strengthen international opposition to a strike on Baghdad.

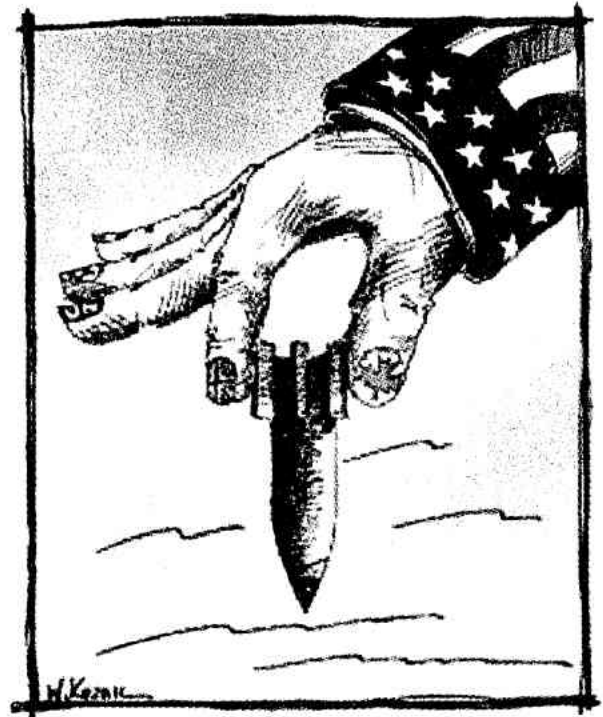
The much touted Western democracy envisioned for an Iraq after Saddam is also belied by American support for dictatorial Governments in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, where the facilitation of free elections would undoubtedly result in nations vehemently opposed to American foreign policy and all it stands for. The installation of a stable government immune to internal division



and coups will require a substantial American presence for months, if not years. Factionalism resulting after Saddam's demise might encourage Iran to assist the Shi'as in southern Iraq. A Kurdish presence in the Northern oil fields could also prompt a Turkish incursion, although Turkey denies it would become involved in a subsequent land grab. Economic analysts have blithely claimed that the war will be good for the global (read: American) economy and that post war occupation will be paid for by Iraqi oil wealth, but given that the last Gulf War cost at least \$61 billion, the price involved is still likely

to be tremendous, let alone the loss in human life. Economic embargos and sanctions have already irreparably affected the Iraqi civilian population, with more than half a million children dead over the last 10 years.

American rhetoric about Iraq has been consistently undermined by its own hypocritical foreign policy and weapons trade with the nation it now identifies as the chief enemy. Having nursed Saddam Hussein through wars with Iran, civilian uprisings and supplied him via third party corporations with the weapons and chemical technol-



ogy they are now vehemently decrying, the Americans arguably have no foot to stand on when it comes to vetoing UN resolutions on the region. However, this has never stopped them in the past and is unlikely to do so now. After all, Bush has already conscripted a host of nations willing to support or at least tacitly accept his plans for the region, with a vocal Howard-led Australia right behind him all the way. As Scott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector in Iraq stated, "War is not merely an academic exercise or a Nintendo game." Perhaps it is time the US, and its British and Australian sidekicks stopped treating it as such.

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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
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michael petroni: poet in motion

till human voices wake us has been described alternatively as 'soporific' and 'poetry on film'. but in this age of cynicism can one really depend upon the emotional power of t.s. eliot's *love song of j. alfred prufrock* to make something happen? **andrei seeto** and **amber beavis** chatted with director michael petroni on how he dared disturb this universe...

It takes a brave or self-indulgent director to use poetry as an aid or alternative to narrative. Once upon a time there were days when an angst-ridden, middle-class youth could provoke sympathy by merely calling on his class mates to "carpe diem" and when a similar figure had the ability to evoke pathos by standing upon his desk to utter those immortal lines, "o captain my captain". These days have long since passed, thankfully. Well almost, today oodles of arts grant money continues to support the wankiest sections of the economy's service sector. Michael Petroni's first film *Till Human Voices Wake Us* is decidedly poetic and definitively 'Arthouse'. But does this new Australian film fall into that excruciating category of wanked out of sight 'arty films'. *Till Human Voices Wake Us* is not quite comprehensible, nor quite concrete, in its content. At points the film may drive those of shorter temperaments into fidgeting in their seats. Is Petroni a director or an 'auteur', artist or black skivvied hack? Petroni manages to do something that is done, almost without exception, either very badly or not at all today: make a film that emphasises the expressive and deals in the ineffable with the aim to impress on the audience rather than simply tell a story. The overall impact of the film, the impression you're left with when you step out of the cinema, is something greater than the sum of its parts.

Till Human Voices Wake Us does not have the most straightforward of plots, however, Petroni's vision for the film was simple. Deceptively so. It was to create an "emotional response". He does this by telling us the story of two childhood friends, Sam and Sylvie, and how they both wish for "something big to happen". Years later, we see that Sam is

a psychologist in Melbourne but that he is curiously detached from his emotions — a change that has occurred since we last saw him. On a visit to his hometown he meets a young woman who reminds him of his childhood friend and enters into a re-evaluation of all that he knows.

Like the plot of the film itself, *Till Human Voices Wake Us*



took a less than direct route from script to screen. This is the script Petroni wrote as part of his curriculum work at the American Film Institute which, in 1996, won both the AFI's Screenplay

of the Year award and the WGA/Scenario Magazine award for Best New Screenplay. Subsequently, many companies considered it for production. However, there were issues. It appeared that the Australian content along with the format of the film (it takes 40 minutes for the stars, Guy Pearce and Helena Bonham Carter, to make an appearance) were major obstacles between the vision and its achievement on screen. Petroni explained that "numerous producers said 'if you set this in America we'll make it tomorrow'. But I just wasn't prepared to do that and so I said 'no deal'." The atmosphere created by the setting of *Human Voices* is central to the mood of the film and Petroni elaborated saying that "I missed Australia when I wrote it. I really worked to write about what I thought was unique... I think the Australian landscape has a haunted feel about it and I capitalised on that to set a mood" Above all he was focused on making the film "an emotional experience". And when he says 'emotional' that doesn't mean sitting in a cinema surrounded by people dragging on Kleenex boxes.

Till Human Voices Wake Us has been a long time in the making. This somewhat tortuous path taken by Petroni to the full realisation of the film does not, however, come as any surprise given his own career path. A student at Sydney University, Michael studied psychology until he became involved in amateur dramatics, participating as an actor and

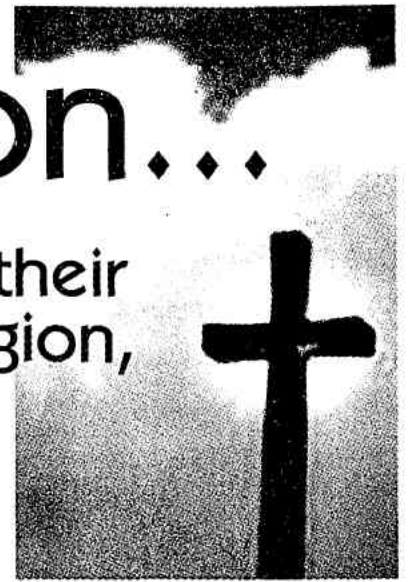
writer in a cabaret show. He even performed at ANU as a support act to the Doug Anthony All Stars with a character called "Psycho Bob". From there he moved into TV work (*The Doug Anthony Show*, *The Big Gig*) at the ABC and it was this, Michael said, that prompted his move from psychology and into writing and directing. Michael admitted some autobiographical inspiration for *Till Human Voices Wake Us*, saying that in a way the film was about this, it was about how he "was heading down the path of becoming a clinical psychologist. But I think for me to do that would be for me to cut off a part of myself. The main character definitely has echoes of me and is perhaps the fate I would have had if I'd gone on with something I didn't have my heart in." From the ABC Petroni applied to the American Film Institute and was accepted as one of 30 students in his field. As someone who started in stand-up comedy and has subsequently moved into directing "strict drama" Michael explained that this move was a result of his interest in being involved in the creative process: "I simply lost my nerve as a performer", he explained, "I always thought I suited being behind the camera". It was then that he became involved with writing, directing and the actual creation of many student films. It was here that he wrote the screenplay for *Till Human Voices Wake Us* as part of his curriculum work. Even while this film was in pre-production and filming, Michael has been centrally involved in many projects including writing the screenplays for *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys* (recently released in the US and starring Jodie Foster), *Further Down The Line* (a thriller starring Julia Roberts) and re-writes of *Queen of the Damned*. He's been extremely busy.

The film has been made but it's only in Australia that we're seeing *Human Voices* the way it was intended to be. During our interview with Petroni we commented that the set up of the film (there being the telling of the story of Sam's youth followed by a few days in his adult life) added to the overall impact of the film. Michael responded saying that he had "wanted to set something up and then pull the rug from under the audience" but that the US/UK version has been re-cut such that the story is told as a series of flashbacks. He said that whilst "the Australian version is definitely my preferred version, the Americans weren't that confident in having the stars turn up as late in the movie as they do. This was the only reason it was re-cut... it's [the result] like another film really. I think it becomes more of an intellectual movie and slightly more of a mystery but it's not as an emotional ride. You lose that." Whilst some have described the film as "soporific", the idea is to let go of what our conscious mind can deal with and, instead, become receptive to the stuff that poetry and dreams are made of. Michael Petroni has but transcribed this heightened emotional state so typical of the subconscious onto celluloid. And it takes a brave person to let us into his dreams.



straight for religion...

wracked with guilt, many people are abandoning their homosexual lifestyles, and finding "comfort" in religion, heterosexual relationships and homophobia. **dave edwards** comments.



Every since 'queer lib' began in earnest in the late 60s, there have been numerous opponents speaking out against homosexuality. Some of the most vocal criticism has come from conservative Christian organisations — opposing changing of sodomy laws and the like, or telling of fire and brimstone awaiting us after the grave. But in the past few years, another kind of anti-gay movement has come to the fore — the 'ex-gay' movement.

It's pretty easy to guess what the ex-gay movement is by its name — it's a group of people who are trying to promote the idea that it is possible to change one's sexuality, usually proffering themselves as examples. While there's nothing new about this — Exodus International, one of the largest ex-gay ministries, has been around since the 1970s —

what is new about this is the way it's being promoted. In July 1998, several Christian groups such as Christian Coalition and the Centre for Reclaiming America for Christ bound together and published full-page "gay conversion" ads in papers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post. These were followed up with TV commercials. The campaign cost more than US\$2 million. Many of the ads featured John and Anne Paulk, a married ex-gay husband and ex-lesbian wife. While Anne only had a few lesbian relationships in college, John's history is a lot more sordid: he was an \$80-an-hour prostitute and a drag queen named 'Candi' before becoming a Christian. They have become the poster couple of the ex-gay movement, appearing on the Oprah Winfrey show and on the cover of Newsweek.

How do people come to the ex-gay movement? The usual story goes that when they were young, and for whatever reason (Anne Paulk says that 85 per cent of those who joined Exodus were either molested, had domineering mothers or weak fathers), they 'fell into' homosexual tendencies, and usually from there on their life heads into a downward spiral. Most feel depressed, or an intense sense of guilt about sex. Many become alcoholics or drug addicts, prostitutes or (gasp) liberal theologians. Eventually, they will have a revelation of some kind, return to Christianity (ie fundamentalist Christianity), and decide to start trying a straight lifestyle.

'Trying' is the keyword here. The message of the ex-gay movement is that "homosexuals can change", but the evidence doesn't speak so clearly as they do. Success rates can be anywhere from about

60 per cent to as low as 30 per cent. Even then, the rates are measuring behaviour (ie are they married) rather than feelings (do they still feel same-sex attraction). A study by an advocate of the ex-gay movement, Dr. Robert Spitzer, claimed that conversion therapy was successful — even though around 50 per cent of the participants admitted some opposite-sex attraction before the therapy, and only 17 per cent of the men and 55 per cent of the women said they were completely heterosexual after the therapy. Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, head of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuals, when asked by Newsweek why he didn't do follow-ups, responded with "I don't have time". Such is the level of professionalism of reparative therapists.



Even some of the leaders of the ex-gay movement have had less than successful conversions. One of the founders of Exodus was expelled for having sex with one of the

men attempting to convert; a similar incident happened involving the former leader of Homosexuals Anonymous. And John Paulk was photographed lingering out in Mr P's, a Washington gay bar, for over half an hour. He initially lied and said he didn't know it was a gay bar and was only looking for a bathroom, before saying he stayed out of curiosity. He was fired from his position as chair of Exodus, yet remains a member of the board.

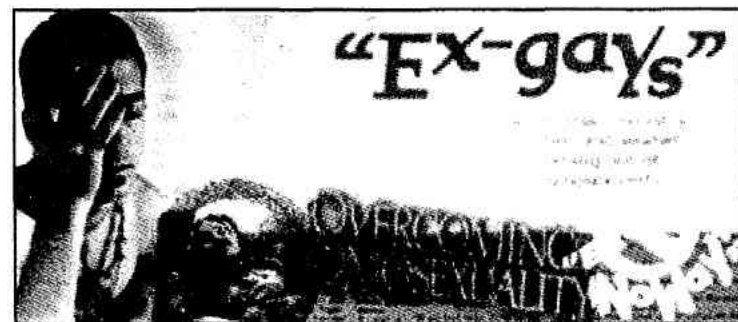
While these groups may have some psychiatrists and psychologists on their side, some of the more mainstream medical groups disagree. The American Psychiatric Association in 1973 acknowledged growing scientific literature and removed homosexuality from its list of mental and emotional disorders. The American Psychological Association supported this move in 1975, and again in 1990, reiterating that conversion therapy does not work. And the Ameri-

can Medical Association said that much of the emotional disturbance that homosexuals experience is caused by an unaccepting environment, and it's not something inherent in being gay or lesbian. In fact, reparative therapy may do more harm than good: many 'ex-gays' speak of the torment they went through trying for years to change their sexuality without success, before finally realising it was something beyond their control.

Even without looking at the evidence, if you think about it something seems amiss in the logic of ex-gay rhetoric. If homosexuality really was a choice, it seems strange that so many people would choose to be a gay or lesbian in parts of the world where homosexuality is severely punished by law, such as in some parts of Africa and the Middle East today, and in Europe, America and Australia twenty or thirty years ago.

And even if you could change your sexuality, would you really want to? At least in the Western world, gay liberation has brought many changes, and while there is still much progress to be made, such as recognising same-sex marriages and changing public attitudes, it is certainly possible to be openly gay or lesbian without too much of a problem.

As for Christianity being at odds with homosexuality, that's definitely up for debate. Many of the verses quoted to condemn homosexuality come from parts of the Bible that aren't fol-



lowed any more or are more reflections of the culture of the time than of God's word (such as Leviticus, which has laws telling us not to shave or cut our hair, or to let more than one kind of cattle graze in the same field). There are many gay-friendly churches and Christian organisations, such as the Metropolitan Community Church and the Australian Student Christian Movement, and many of the mainline churches, especially the Uniting Church and the broad Anglican Church, are changing their stance on homosexual relationships.

No one really knows why some people are gay and some people are straight. Ex-gay advocates dissect the Bible, trying to justify punishment of homosexuality — the same way the Pharisees dissected through the Law. That was one thing Jesus warned against. Being gay is nothing to be ashamed of. To the ex-gay movement, I say, to 'love your neighbour as yourself' is no sin at all.

The Heterosexual Lifestyle





dykes with dominoes

according to the sealed sections in *cleo*, being a lesbian involves playing a lot of guitar with your best friend, pillow fights and maybe frolicking in skimpy night wear. *jessie mitchell* asks where the real images of queer women are.



The Cosmopolitan headline that caught my eye was "Girl + Girl Sex Confessions: Threesomes, Bi-Curious Flings and How Do Two Girls Actually Do It Anyway?!" Dribbly old pervert that I am, I must admit the photographs shocked me. Apparently what two girls actually do involves wafting around in matching sky-blue underwear and vapid expressions, putting lipstick on each other, playing dominoes and strumming guitars. How embarrassing — to think I've had it wrong all these years.

Why is it that so-called women's magazines seem unable to write about queer women without being offensive, voyeuristic or laughable? These rare articles still tend to dismiss lesbianism and bisexuality as either an adolescent phase, a sad problem or a bit of foreplay to titillate the blokes. While often dismissed as trivial and silly, these magazines are a hugely popular source of advice and discussion about women's sexuality, particularly important for adolescent girls. Thus, while their portraits of dykes with domino fetishes are pretty ludicrous, they also deserve more serious consideration.

Their depictions of "Girl + Girl" sex, far from being shocking, generally reinforce heterosexuality. Firstly, they are usually featured in "Believe It or Not!" sections, once again positioning lesbians as marginalised and weird. Secondly, queer sex is frequently portrayed as anonymous and existing outside women's "real" lives. Thus, the most explicit sexual descriptions in the Cosmo article were about female sex workers — here, lesbian sex is something you do for a secret, scandalous one-off with women deemed to be outside "normal" society. (Interestingly, after the anonymous sex scenario, the other major scenario depicted was sex between straight best friends. This I found genuinely bizarre, and would welcome any explanations.)

In these articles, descriptions of threesomes involving a man abound, generally emphasising how much it turned him on. Other accounts conclude happily with one or both women returning to their boyfriends. One account says her threesome ended well because the man and other woman are now engaged. Another says the lesbian sex made her "enjoy his sexual advances more than ever"; another realised afterwards "I

knew more than ever that I wanted to marry Nick. Suddenly I craved his dependability and his 'maleness'." This same issue included a celebrity section about how Anne Heche left Ellen and "is now a happily hetero new mom!", and articles on why men find "lesbians" sexy and whether men would be hurt if their girlfriends slept with women. My personal favourite anecdote describes two teenage girls paid to "perform a lesbian sex show" for male buddies: "Now I like to think of it as a step in growing up. You'd be surprised how many teenage girls do it."

What is going on here? It's not that threesomes or going from girls to boys is bad. But it's no accident that of 18 anecdotes in the Cosmo special, only one was by a woman who identified as a lesbian. By emphasising blokey stories and excluding others, magazines end up implying that sex should preferably involve a man or at least end with a return to heterosexual normalcy. This idea permeates depictions of bisexuality. Magazines seem more willing to feature stories by women who have had both male and female partners, and while it's great to see bi women recognized, the version of bisexuality magazines deem acceptable generally involves having anonymous sex with a woman in a spa, before going home to your boyfriend. There is nothing wrong with this, but when it is the only bisexual possibility acknowledged, it becomes problematic. Being bi is too often represented as being basically straight, with a little extra spice to please the guy.

Throughout these articles, the assumption of heterosexuality remains. The sexual counselling pages generally imply that a woman is straight until conclusively proven otherwise. One agony aunt reassured a Christian girl "repulsed" by frequent sexual dreams about women that these dreams could symbolise many things — perhaps the desire for soft and gentle sex with a man? (Too bad if Christian-girl's dreams involved being tied up and spanked by Lucy the Leather Bitch.) Another counsellor assured readers "People fantasise about things they'd never really want to happen ... The trick is not to interpret fantasies so literally." Of

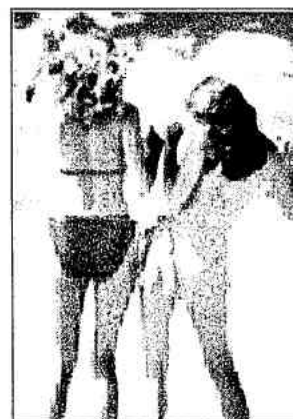
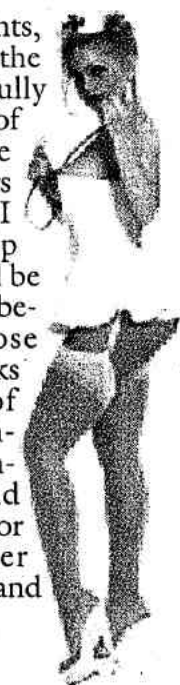
course this is true to some extent. But the constant reminders that such desires "don't necessarily make you a lesbian" are not just helpful advice. How often do they tell readers that fantasising about men doesn't necessarily make you straight?

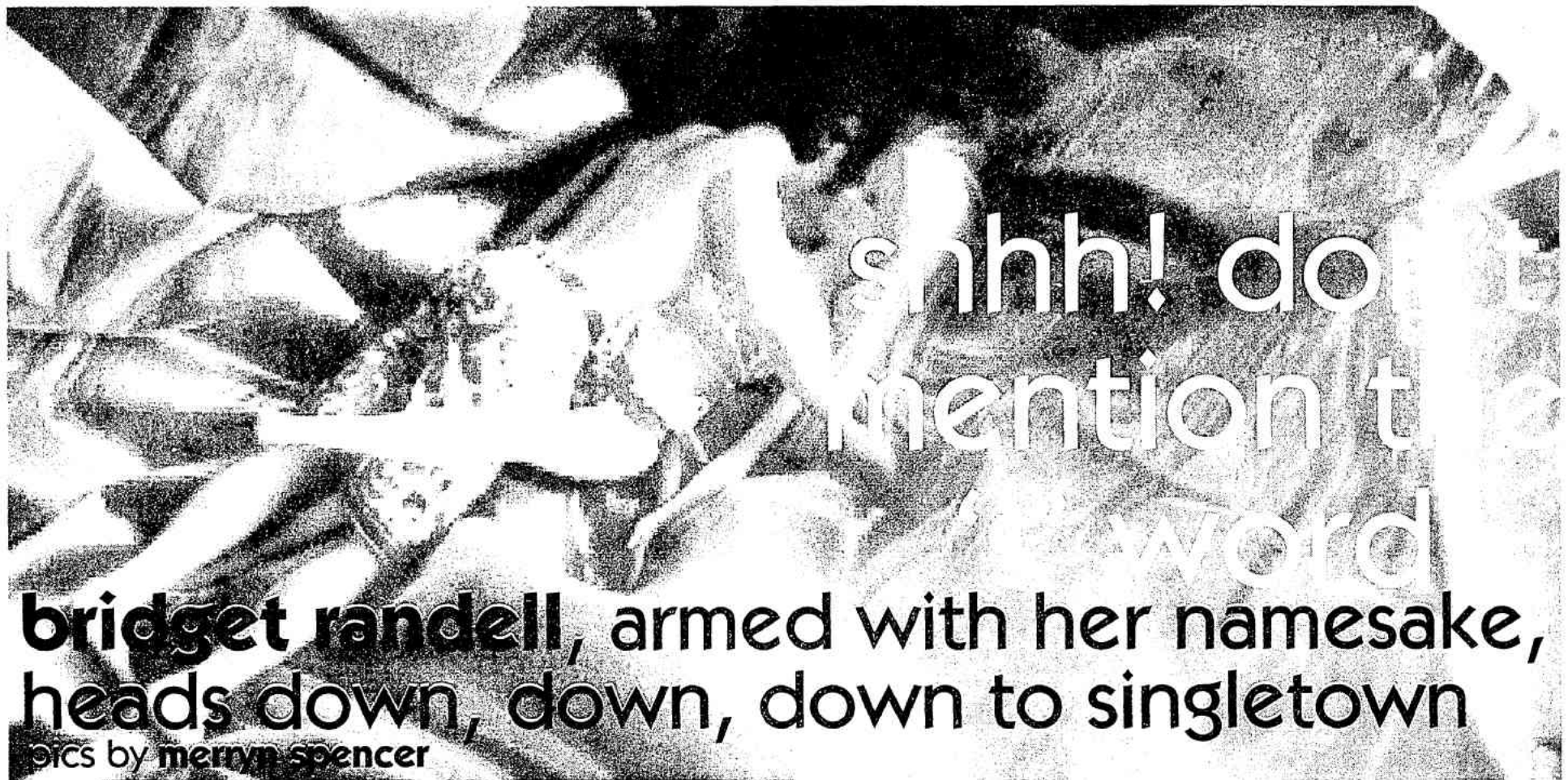


Not all "lesbian curiosity" articles are awful. But even the sympathetic ones are frequently presented strangely or offensively (like my favourite headline: "Become a Lesbian: Double Your Wardrobe!").

One example was a Cosmo article from 2001 by a bisexual woman, intelligently discussing the politics of being bi and her annoyance at being labelled a "former lesbian". And what headline did Cosmo give the article? "I used to be a lesbian: Now I'm straight!" Last year *Cleo* ran a sensitive article about a heterosexual woman's response to her sister's lesbianism, headed: "You may think you have the most liberal views on homosexuality — live and let live, right? But what if you suddenly discovered that your own sister was gay?" The "you" being addressed here is, as always, presumed to be heterosexual. In some ways, this may seem reasonable; I doubt many dykes buy magazines on "How to be his best blow job ever". But by automatically treating their readers as straight, the magazines, however well-meaning, reinforce heterosexuality as the unchallenged norm. It's notable that the most sympathetic articles usually focus on queer women's relationships with their families, straight friends and former hetero lovers — in other words, their relationship to the straight world. The question of how queer women relate to one another — unless it involves having a threesome with a guy in an aeroplane toilet — is largely ignored.

Thus, despite liberal sentiments, women's magazines still find the "Girl + Girl" equation awfully tricky. Given that depictions of queer women in this media are very recent, another few years may see improvement. But I can't help feeling it will be a little while before those Cosmo chicks get out of their matching blue underwear and tell the editor to take her domino set and shove it.





Spring has sprung again, and as the sky becomes bluer and the sun begins radiating heat, something is stirring in the hearts and minds of people. Women are suddenly increasing their exercise regimes in a bid to fit into that summer dress, and guys start doing a few more reps to prepare for the upcoming muscle shirt weather. Is it simply a change in the season which has prompted such self-awareness and pride in one's looks? Perhaps.

Have you ever noticed the change of season usually coincides with break-ups? How many of us have spent the summer resisting the urge

At Uni, there is just as much emphasis on being a part of a couple. Some poor misguided youth repeatedly shares with me his theory on love: "You're only half a person until you find your other half, Bridg." Gosh, how depressing! But looking at being single, it's not all peaches and cream.

I guess the worst thing is missing the closeness of having someone who knows your every expression and can tell how you're feeling just by looking at you. Or there are times when you're out and want to party on when suddenly everyone else wants to go home because they're "tired", when really you know they're going home to bed and the thought of walking home next to them as they perform their premarital ritual of eye gazing and hand holding makes you want to vomit.

It can also be quite lonely as your friends start announcing their engagements, and you begin to live life as Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, always the groomsman, never the groom. More alarming is that 20 per cent of Australian women will never marry, and 50 per cent of all college or university graduates will never have children. All of a sudden it sheds a new light on another

pearl of wisdom from the previously mentioned self-professed love guru: "being single is depressing".

When I first thought of writing this piece I was ecstatic about my newly single status. I was so elated about being

my own person again that I wanted to share my joy about being single. I was sick of hearing other single enthusiasts spout crap about how being single is great because it means you can say 'yes' to dates. Sue Oslan, author of book

"some poor misguided youth repeatedly shares with me his theory on love: "You're only half a person until you find your other half, bridg."



on the joys of being single, even recommended buying the ingredients to your favourite meal, and picking someone up in the supermarket by offering to cook for them. No wonder people have a strange opinion of singles! According to Sue, you won't find your soul mate behind the TV or couch (hmm, smart woman). The only thing that worries me is that she thinks the chances are much more likely in isle nine between the pasta and the ready-made sauce.

A friend has a theory that poor old Sue was



of a hot fling, only to return to a not-so-faithful partner? Just as spring gives birth to new life, one also notices new relationships begin to blossom. Secret longings which have lain dormant for the winter are now bearing themselves and there's a PDA at every corner.

The Beatles sang of love being all you need, but the naughty lyric has since changed to "without love you are nothing". Being single has never been easy. During High School being defined with the 's' word was something to hang your head about. Anyone who was anyone was with someone.



What makes young Singletons think they are getting the better deal?

1. Overwhelmingly, the same answer: Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!
2. Getting to know yourself and really liking it!
You can do things at your own pace and don't have to justify your actions to anyone.
3. You can take off to the coast with a member of the opposite sex without anyone accusing you of having an affair.
4. You can tease your best friend about being under the thumb.
5. You can watch *Meet the Parents* without breaking out in a cold sweat and having nightmares for nights afterwards.
6. You can pretty much guarantee if anyone is humping your leg in a busy nightclub it's not your drunk boyfriend.
7. You don't have to worry about your other half calling in the middle of the night after drinking a bottle of vodka just to tell you something important which he/she instantly forgets.
8. You can hang out with a wide variety of people, and spend as long as you want with them, without someone getting jealous.

looking for love in all the wrong places when she suddenly stumbled on the idea of writing a book about how great it is to be alone. Then, once she'd published it, she held a book launch with an all male guest list and it was there she found the inspiration for her next book: *Getting it On*.

For everyone, being single means different things. So, I want to share what I feel it means. Far from the typical B grade American teen movie I don't define it as the geek wearing pants up to his ribs, hiding behind coke bottle glasses, nor do I see it as the shy girl who spends the ball crying in the bathroom because nobody asked her to dance. Whilst some would see Singletons as social outcasts, having fish-like scales as in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, I don't. In my experience people who have been single for any length of time are more adjusted and confident than those who go from one partner to the next because they just can't be alone.

Unfortunately, singles are being given as much credit as religious youth who meet each other at Jesus Freak camps like Jesusstock and marry before they enter adulthood. Looking at their belief system it is easy to see why they would marry so early. However asking a Singleton why

The thing I value most about being single is that it's one of the most liberating experiences in life. Knowing that you are truly happy with yourself, and that you're out there nakedly and openly with no frills or accessories. It's the state of being which is so difficult to maintain if you are involved with someone: remaining free from the label of someone's boyfriend or girlfriend. Being single is just being you.

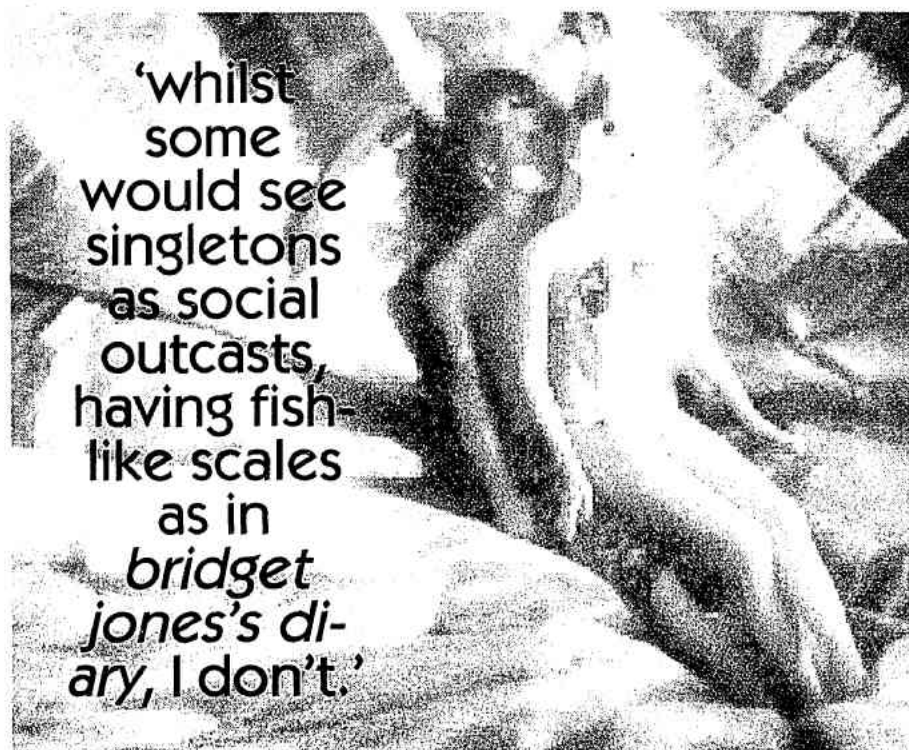
Sure, some people hate it, and I'm not saying that it's all fun and games. But it is a lot more hassle free, and

they are not attached, one is never satisfied with "I'm happy by myself", there has to be something else. You can see the reasons running through your grandmother's mind as she says "Oh well, there are plenty more fish in the sea" (translation: *poor dear, must be hard to be a lesbian these days*).

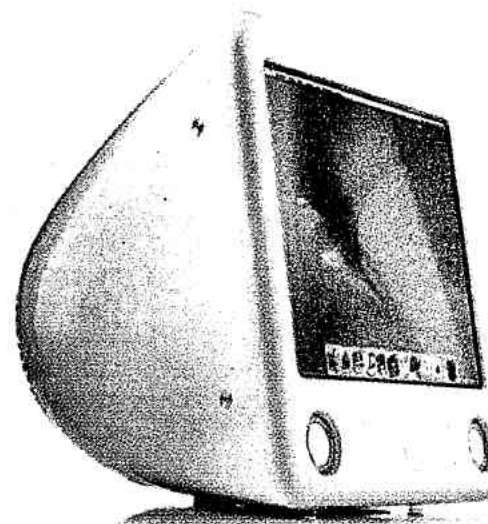
But, just so there is no confusion; if you are single you aren't alone. You might see people, or go on a date. Hell, you might even have wild sex until dawn every now and then.

with more variety and spontaneity than being in a long-term relationship. It is the joy of making your own decisions based on what you want, without a second thought to someone else's hopes, desires, plans for the evening, or favourite toothpaste brand.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that if you are happy with your life being single you can put up with crap from people who have abandoned your liberated lifestyle for the more traditional ball and chain. At times you may want to drink yourself into oblivion and there are times when this is quite acceptable, after all, Bridget Jones chose vodka. Being single is about taking on the world by yourself, having inner strength and happiness. Yet beware: being the only single person surrounded by couples dancing, kissing or holding hands is about as cosy as having a pinecone shoved up your arse.



'whilst some would see singletons as social outcasts, having fish-like scales as in *bridget jones's diary*, I don't.'



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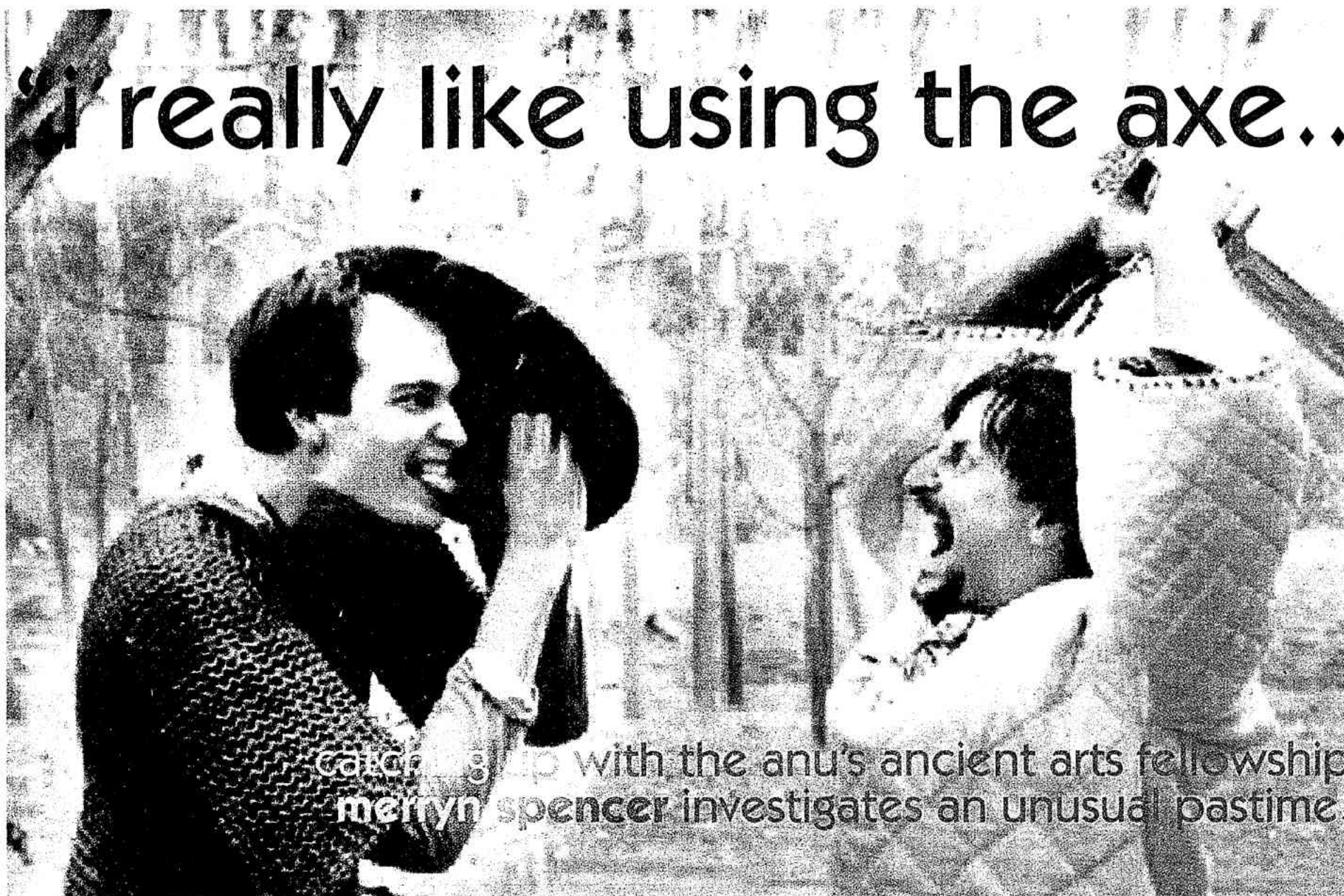


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“I really like using the axe...”



catching up with the anu's ancient arts fellowship
merryn spencer investigates an unusual pastime.

While wielding a sword over someone draped in ten kilos worth of armour may seem like a pastime for lunatics, the ANU's Ancient Arts Fellowship actually does this stuff for fun. AAF is a society devoted entirely to recreating the dark ages (from 400 AD to 1200 AD) and covers all arts and crafts including, but not just limited to, whacking people with swords, though combat is often the first thing which attracts people to the club. Once a member, you can choose your race from Saxon, Norman or Vikings. Dave, a self-confessed Viking addict and Sculpture student at NITA, has been involved with AAF since March. “I was attracted to Vikings because of the berserker element, [that] battle rage where

they lose the plot and go off and kill people left, right and centre.” He laughs. “For me, it’s partly escapism, but it’s also the physical joy of putting on this armour and hitting someone,” he asserts. “And there’s skill involved. It’s [similar to] a martial art. The safety moves we learn rigorously, blows within a certain range, for example, within a certain angle.” Dave’s talk of the club had piqued my interest, so I rocked up to a training session one Wednesday afternoon outside the Sports Union. Watching these dark-ages fighters work their combat lavished by fine white gum trees, their armour glinting in the afternoon sun...the resplendent scene made me want to try it for myself. Drew, a tall redheaded Viking, who

notices me hanging over the orange fence, eyes glazing over, suggests I try on a helmet. It looked scary. Though it was lined with sheepskin for comfort, putting one on was like crawling into a (heavy) metal drum with limited peripheral vision to match. Nevertheless, there was something eerily familiar about flipping a sword over in my palm, considering how many of my ancestors got up to this sort of thing in their time. I could see myself now going ballistic with one of them on the battlefield...eyes burning, screaming obscenities at my enemies...

“I got into the club for historical reasons, mainly,” said Drew, shaking me out of my Viking daydream. “It’s something different.” The

AAF website gleans further details about what goes on in combat: *Most combat involves people getting dressed up in armour and whacking each other with swords. It says. Strict safety regulations are enforced, however, and serious injuries are rare. Some groups also fire muskets and canon at each other, but naturally, do not load them with anything other than powder.*

Dave told me the main problem with wearing armour was just the weight to begin with. But, he also added that it’s actually the padding that does most of the work, it depends how much you can “take the pain”. “When you’re in an intense fighting situation you feel the pain less.” *Pain?* No one had prepared me for that. But there’s only bruising, Dave insists. I’m not too sure on this one, the little chicken in my head screams out that any kind of blow would resound in my head for several days afterwards. So, in combat, how do you decide if you’re ‘dead’? “You take a blow, if it’s heavy enough on the head.” Dave explains. “It’s sort of your own judge-



“for me, it’s partly escapism, but it’s also the physical joy of putting on this armour and hitting someone.”
dave, viking.

ment, and if you judge that the swing was big enough to kill you then you take it. If there wasn't enough force behind the blow then you wouldn't take it, though it's not like people are swinging at full strength. It's where the blow comes from as well. I went to a Castle Siege recently and there was a shortage of swords so I used an axe. I really like using the axe."

A Siege, it seems, consists of "Half the people are up the top, half the people are down the bottom," as Dave explains, "and there are defenders and attackers, and you try and take the castle before lunch so the defenders get a chance to take the castle after lunch. There's a flag at the top. It was at a practise tower for fire fighters in Sydney, seven stories." It turns out one of the members who is a firefighter secured the venue for the Siege.

AAF attracts people from all walks of life, and provides displays on medieval and early Euro-



Left: it's true: no medievalist is complete without their mead.



'there was something eerily familiar about flipping a sword over in my palm, considering how many of my ancestors got up to this sort of thing in their time. I could see myself now going ballistic with one of them on the battlefield...eyes burning, screaming obscenities at my enemies...'

pean life and combat to schools and at other cultural events. Their school displays are really worth looking at, Drew assures me, and it's true that school children will remember a one-hour live display much more distinctly than three hours bored to tears in a classroom. Some delectable offerings are re-enactments of Battle of Hastings, Viking raids and, Normandy invasions. In these displays, combat, tactics, descriptions of historical background, dress, social codes and laws and optional audience participation are all included.

AAF also publishes a regular magazine called *The Troubadour*, and are working on publishing other material containing information useful to students, other medieval groups, and those interested in history.

As for the costuming in AAF, Dave has his own view: "They're into everything and it has to be period, although they're not one-hundred percent pure. There's one guy where you can't mention the word 'chain-mail' at all. It's 'mail' it's not 'chain-mail' you just can't say that word. He's a purist. He takes period to the extreme. Most people use sewing machines to make clothes, they don't sit there with a bone-needle, they're not hand-loomed their clothes or anything." When I speak to Drew about making costume, he insists that he can only sew leather. Shortly afterwards he shows off his 'mail' constructed from tiny circles of wire wound together like springs, then cut and closed off, which had taken him six weeks to make. It's a gorgeous garment, but it looks so Tolkienesque I keep expecting Legolas to leap out of the trees but he doesn't (much to my disappointment).

AAF is also renowned for its gatherings. Again, I track the website: *Most medieval groups hold regular gatherings to get together and compare notes, It says. They show off what they have made and the like. Most also hold feasts, which are basically an attempt at re-creating a medieval-style feast, and also to dress up in costume, act rowdy, and eye off each other's nice crockery.* Sounds like fun. The October long weekend is reserved for the third annual AAF Laurel Hut Weekend. It must be quite interesting, as Drew is very keen for me to come and check it out. The Laurel Hut Weekend activities on offer included medieval board games, dancing, tablet weaving and combat. Members will build a fort and

participate in an intensive fighting weekend (why do I get the feeling that this is all club members are there for, really?)

The AAF also attends national events, as Ben Cook wrote on a report on the Brisbane Medieval Fayre: "An annual event where various medieval groups, and individuals, get together for two days to entertain the public. It incorporates the Brisbane Folk Festival, so after the medieval activities are over for the day, there's still plenty of music and entertainment to be had in the evenings (even if most Brisbanites do tend to go to bed when Humphrey tells them to). The event used to be called the Brisbane Medieval Fayre and Tournament, or BuMFAT for short, and there is no better way to annoy one of the organisers than to use this name." Dave informed me later that there was talk of calling the Canberra weekend CuMFAT, but quickly canned.

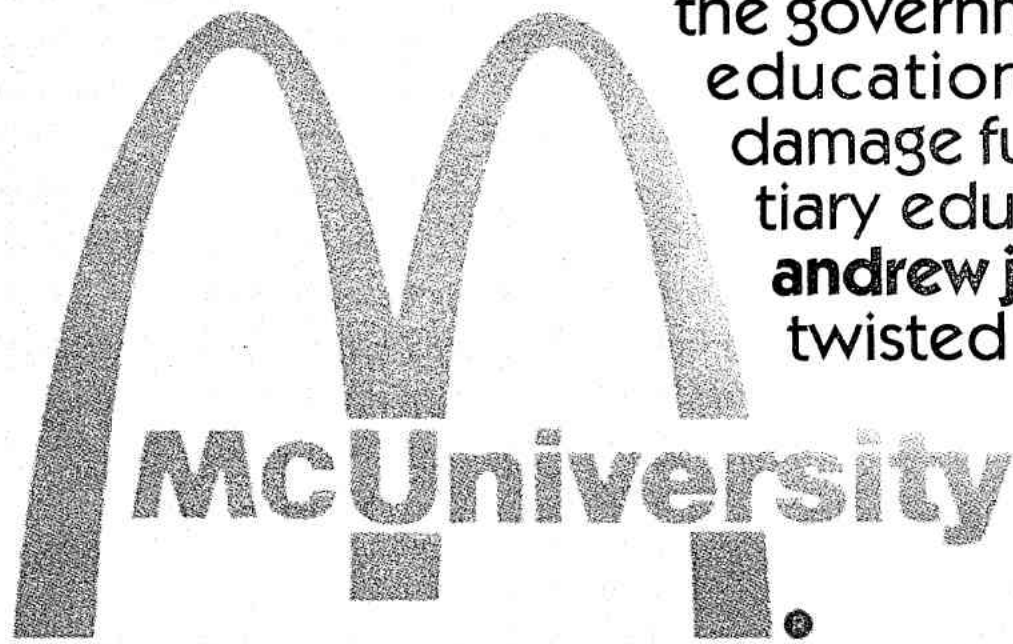
After this insight into one of the many medieval reenactment societies in Australia, I wonder what entertainment may await me if I take up Drew's offer of participating in the famous Laurel Hut weekend. Shall it be so, then?

(Below) My knight in shining armour. Or is that a Viking?



For further information, or to contact the Ancient Arts Fellowship:
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 Snail-mail PO Box 378, Belconnen, ACT,
 Australia 2616, or
 Telephone 02 6254 1496

goodbye knowledge nation, hello elitism



the government's recent review of higher education proposes changes which damage further an already suffering tertiary education sector.

andrew jory unravels brendan nelson's twisted logic.

Universities in Australia don't have enough funding. An examination of any public tertiary institution in Australia reveals this clearly. Rising class sizes have ensured Australia has the fourth lowest staff-to-student ratio in OECD countries (only Turkey, Italy and Greece are worse off). Small classes are seen as inefficient and are discontinued. Our libraries are struggling to maintain import levels of books and periodicals as a result of the weak Australian dollar. Our academics are increasingly being lured overseas or into the private sector as remuneration fails to keep pace with international trends.

Dr Nelson's Review of Higher Education puts forward four funding models to provide for higher education in the future. These are discipline based funding, fee deregulation, flat rate learning entitlements, and variable rate learning entitlements. All four models represent some form of paradigm shift towards a user-pays system. Evidence of this is seen in the review discussion paper, *Setting Firm Foundations*, which describes public funding to universities as a 'subsidy' (Chubb 2002). This description may seem insignificant, but most universities are institutions set up, regulated and funded

"You'd like an education?
But's \$50 000 thank you."



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by State or Commonwealth statutes. They are creatures of a public system and not recipients of subsidies. This change of mindset to-

wards a user-pays system undermines the true value of the public higher education system in Australia.

There are several rationales justifying public funding for universities. First, the federal government derives an immediate economic benefit from its contribution to the sector. The federal government is the source of 46 per cent of all university funding and invests \$6.4 bil-

lion in universities. *Setting Firm Foundations* reports: that higher education contributed \$10.6 billion annually to the Australian economy (about two per cent of GNP), with a total economic impact of over \$22 billion. Universities employ around 79 300 people, and contribute about \$8.7 billion per year to the economy through expenditure on staff, non-wage purchases and net capital expenditure. In addition, students spend a further \$1.79 billion on education and related activities, while staff add an additional \$70.5 million by way of consultancy income. The study estimates that Australia's universities receive over \$1.18 billion per year in research income, generating approximately \$2.23 billion worth of spillover benefits to Australian industry. Thus in terms of direct tax returns the federal government receives about 11 per cent profit on its investment. In contrast, private universities only return around 9 per cent of investment in direct tax returns, a fall due partly to fewer people participating in the system. The all-too-com-

mon myth of publicly funded universities as a financial black hole is thus factually incorrect.

In addition to their direct impact on the economy, public universities provide a raft of benefits to the community that are not easily quantifiable, but nonetheless produce tangible economic and social improvements. For instance, one feature of the higher education sector is that of mass participation, creating a more educated society. It is widely accepted that an educated population, increases a country's economic productivity, and has the side effect of making Australia a more attractive target for foreign investment. Productivity gains stemming from education are particularly important if Australia wishes to present itself to the

world as a knowledge economy. In addition there are persuasive arguments that an educated population is inherently valuable in creating a more diverse, critical and tolerant society.

These positive externalities — broad social benefits from higher education — are not taken into account by private investors, who only take account of benefits (and costs) stemming directly from their investment in universities. Because these externalities go unrecognised by private investors, public funding is needed to create the socially optimum level of investment in universities; if funding comes only from private sources, even the most callous economic rationalist will admit universities will be under-funded. The recent review of higher education recognises this powerful justification for government funding, but states: "while the externalities described above provide a powerful argument for the continued public subsidy of higher education, there is little empirical evidence of the size of these externalities and no formula that enables the Government to

select an optimal balance between public and private investment."

Therefore, the funding models proposed represent something of an inexact science.

Some consideration of the size of the externalities is reasonable and would provide a solid basis for the construction of a model, instead of putting it in the too hard basket. However, Nelson's position on externalities is made clear elsewhere in the document, for instance this rather contrite and individual example: "Outside the Queensland University of Technology, I asked a woman unconnected with it what she thought of universities. She reflected for a moment and replied, "I don't know. I applied to go to one once and didn't get in. But if you're going in there you can tell them this for me. I work hard and my taxes help pay for what goes on in there. But when they come out and apply for the same job as me, they'll get the job."

Nelson's true colours are clear. Individuals procure private benefit while the public pays for little gain. However the truth lies far from this simplistic argument that taxpayers pay hard-earned money, uni students benefit and steal their jobs. Certainly individuals benefit enormously from higher education, however they already meet some of the cost through



"Humm... how can I fuck over students today?"

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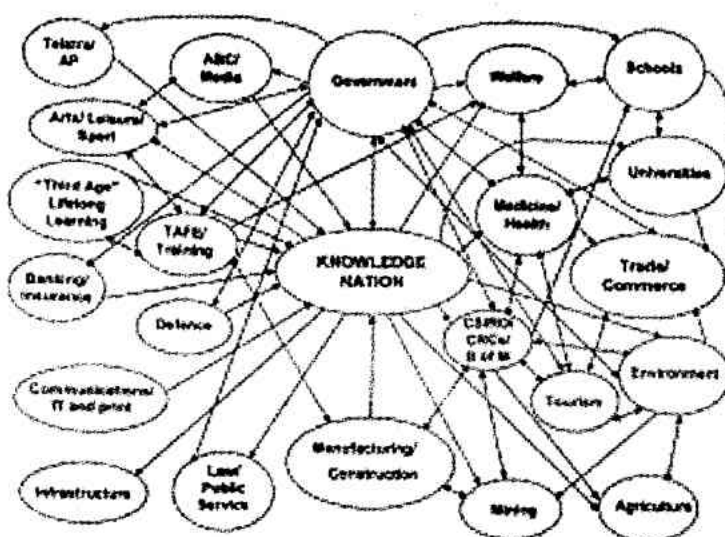
HECS. Individual benefit, however, does not undermine the fact that government spending on higher education should be proportionate to the size of the system's externalities, which add value to Australian infrastructure. In relation to externalities, Nelson's four models have failed to accommodate existing data. Indeed, *Setting Firm Foundations* begins with the statement: "Up to date comparative data is difficult to obtain and is used only sparingly in this paper."

This is not a firm foundation from which to develop policy.

In addition, there are specific problems with the four funding models. The Discipline-based model would see the federal government set differential HECS rates for different courses based on what DEST perceived to be the course costs for those areas. DEST would also be able to set the number of positions of funding per course. Universities would be able to charge full up-front fees to students who fell outside the government quota. Under this system, the government could create strong incentives for study in a particular area, detracting from study in other areas. For instance, the government could determine that law was more expensive to teach than arts, and 'justifiably' devote more funding per student to law. This would create incentives for students to study law instead of arts. These skewed incentives minimise free choices for students, and prove the model does not satisfy the review's own criteria of increasing student choice. In addition, there is already reason to suspect the government of getting the funding allocation wrong. Currently there

are three HECS bands, related to future income of students and perceived course costs. Law currently costs more to the student than Science, despite the higher cost of Science. There is an element of the government trying to pick winners and could lead to regulatory capture of certain areas. One further problem with the model is it does not promote sound internal management, as there are incentives on faculties to inflate the cost of their courses in order to attract more funding.

The second proposal, of fee deregulation, would shift the burden of funding from the government to the student. Fee deregulation would allow campuses to set their own fees, income contingent loans would still exist in the form of HECS. Current student debt from HECS is massive, with students collectively owing \$8.7 Billion. A student who graduates with a HECS band 3 degree such as law will already owe about \$30,000 in HECS debt. Increased HECS charges would deter students from studying. The main proponents of this system are Alan Gilbert and Gavin Brown, the Vice-Chancellors of Sydney and Melbourne University. They have indicated they would charge as



(Above) You thought this was hard to understand? Try understanding what the hell Brendan Nelson is thinking.

ever, many small classes represent an advantage that a university may have over its competitors. An example of this is the Faculty of Asian Studies at the ANU, which despite having small class sizes is the only provider of such courses in Australia.

Therefore some aspects of regulation in other review documents are mutually exclusive with a deregulated system. It would also see the collapse of many regional universities who

couldn't compete with the reputation and status of the major metropolitan universities. Flat rate learning entitlements are aimed at maximising student choice by giving the student government money to spend at the institution of their choice. Therefore government funding would not be directed to universities but to the student. However, universities would be able to set their own fees, and the student would meet the difference between the entitlement and the cost of the course. Further the entitlements would be granted on the basis of academic merit. Therefore students who had higher entrance scores would receive more funding than students who had lower scores. This would detract from the mass participation. Flat rate learning entitlements would benefit major metropolitan universities as the government entitlements for smarter students would flow to them. Variable entitlements involve the same formula as above but the entitlement would not be based on academic merit alone, it would include a consideration of the cost of the course. Clearly the government could encourage students to study in particular courses to the detriment of other courses. Universities need more funding. The federal government has a responsibility to provide this funding. Deregulation of the sector would lead to a system that discriminates against potential students on the basis of wealth. The claims of sustainability accruing from a deregulated student market need to be examined in greater detail than the review entails and weighed against the loss of mass student participation.

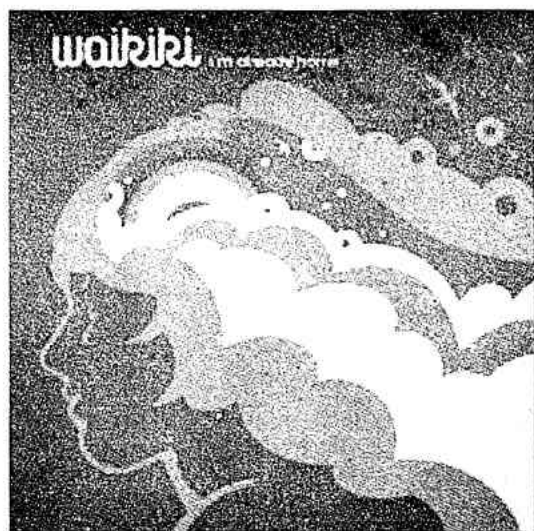
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**waikiki, i'm already home
thom mackey**



You know, call me jaded, but it really is a lovely surprise to hear a band with a vocalist that can actually sing. Think about it. So many bands nowadays - too many bands - don't even try. They rely on the popularity of electro-hip-hop to carry them through, they feel that it is not necessary to learn to express their lyrics with the passion and quality that they (in theory) deserve. Which is not to say that the beats behind the voice are not worthwhile, I simply think that it's refreshing to hear a band that actually tries. Needless to say, it is even better when they succeed. Not only do I like the singer(s) of the band, they actually inspire you to sing along; a relatively rare trait amongst bands nowadays, and something that I, at least, am fond of. Call me old-fashioned, and god knows I like weird experimental electronica and oldskool hip hop as much as the next guy, but I like it when I hear a "traditional" band still making

music. This, of course, is not to say that Waikiki are old-fashioned. Their happy feelgood guitar pop is enhanced by a touch of modernity; it's not as though all these guys are doing is rehashing Sgt. Pepper again. While they do list their influences as including the Beatles and Radiohead, I think I also detect a touch of Jane's Addiction, or maybe even Elvis Costello. This is a good thing. Waikiki have had a lot of airplay on various radio stations, especially JJJ, and their singles *New Technology* and *Here Comes September* are probably well known to you. These two singles give a pretty accurate representation of the album as a whole - if you like them, you'll like the rest, too. If you haven't heard them, then give it a try; I think these newcomers really have the potential to turn into another modern Aussie classic, alongside the ever-so-popular Powderfinger and George.

**cabaret voltaire, the original sound of sheffield '78/'82: best of
bryna howes**



I'd like to say that Cabaret Voltaire teases the listener. I'd like to say they had the vision, but lacked the method. But, between the droning tones and echoing voice, you can't say much. It's as worthwhile as trying to converse with a friend over a crowded club. Picture it, if you can. It's a seedy club, small, with a dark sticky dance floor. A DJ jolts to this music while a pseudo-hardcore MC talks you numb. The voice is chopped and distorted so much that if it predicted the end of the world, who could actually hear enough to know? I'd rather listen to John Travolta duet with Moby. I'd rather listen to the dozen unsigned "electronic" demons. Fuck, I'd rather listen to "I told you so, I told you so" than this. (Interruption: I've heard that someone actually quite likes this music. Treat these brackets like a secret I'm whispering to you so that no one else hears.) I probably would dance to it were I in the club mentioned. I'd probably need to be holding two drinks, with another at my feet, and I'd

probably only dance until my friend stopped chatting up guys. I'll even give them credit for their song titles. They have precision and accuracy in their identification. "Nag Nag Nag" is obvious, "Loosen the Clamp" is almost symbolic, and "No Escape" tells it how it is. But! (Don't think this reviewer is suddenly turning...) It is a "Best Of" album, admittedly, but since when has a best of compilation ever really represented an artists prime work? I'd like to humour myself and pretend there is something else out there, but it's not worth the pain. I sit it back on the shelf. The artwork stands out especially. Its pages are like bad photocopies, black and white collages of murder headlines and portraits of the dead. It hints towards political romanticism, but I'm not buying it. I'm packaging it, slapping on the label "Cabaret Voltaire: For the Dancer who already has a Headache," and returning to sender.

**machine gun fellatio, paging mr strike
miranda tetlow**



I was one of the many disbelievers who scorned Machine Gun Fellatio's seemingly insincere promise that they would return to the ANU Bar for free. Especially given their current status as the overplayed darlings of Triple J, everyone's favourite not-so-alternative youth radio station. But return they did, and the band won innumerable student hearts in the process. With *Paging Mr Strike*, MGF have once again delivered all that they promised, and with style.

Paging Mr Strike is their usual cocktail of sex, drugs and plenty of them—in the cover acknowledgments the band thank their "dealers' dealers' dealers" and "all the people who made it into this marvellous country of ours in the last 18 months, particularly all the ones with the good stuff hidden in wooden ducks, china dolls and/or up their own asses, may the condoms never split." Indeed.

So why do we love MGF so much? The sex and drugs lyrical combo is hardly groundbreaking or profound, and the band could also probably use a few music lessons (on the track

"My ex-girlfriend's boyfriend", Pinky even admits as much). Maybe it is the DIY quality that inspires Australian audiences. That and the outstanding costume selections from Vinnies. Fuck it, if these guys can be successful, the rest of us have no excuse.

There's a couple of strike out tracks, namely "Wot u got" and "The Mirrorball's starting to rock MK II", but the singles are catchy, particularly the songs "Take it slow", "Pussy Town" and "Rollercoaster". "Amorous" and "Let me be your dirty fucking whore" are also great tunes while "Chase the dragon" is a nice drug taking subversion of Killing Heidi's song "Weir".

This album is just plain fun and the perfect CD for summertime intoxication. Crank it up at parties and make new "friends"/scandalise your neighbours by singing along (loudly) to "Pussy Town" and "Let me be your dirty fucking whore".

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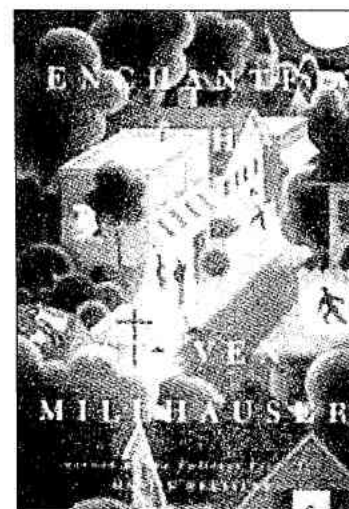
steven milhauser, *enchanted night*
mark billington

Steven Milhauser's *Enchanted Night* may sound like a Mills and Boon romance, but it's not. It's much worse - and as onanistic as any XXX-rated bodice-ripper. This whorish fakery was purpose designed to please insipid, limp-wristed, lisp-ing, effete, ineffectual, buck-toothed losers. Let me be very clear. If you enjoy *Enchanted Night* you are a disgusting, pseudointellectual, Oscar Wilde-loving [redacted] completely lost in your lonely, tummy-rubbing fantasy world. You hide your craven desire for literary titillation beneath a thin veneer of 'academic' interest in Milhauser's use of the "surreal plot devices" and the "inter-textual tropes of fairy-tale and freedom". Friend, I know your name - and your name is *Mammon*.

Sex, death, human frailty and intoxicating nature - are these appropriate concerns for fiction writing? Would not God, harsh soap and family values prove just as popular with today's readers? In my view modern literature is firmly set on the Devil's broad and easy road of sin and only a subway full of Saron gas on the way to a Booker prize dinner will set

things right. This novella is a case in point. Its roll-call of depravity includes teen lust, a woman alone, theiving children, talking insects, a boy with a death wish and talking shop dummies. A sixteen year-old boy has sex with the moon in this revolting tale. Is there no age of consent for moon sex? Sixteen - sure as my mother was a holy roller battling for Jesus - isn't it. A man's seed should not be strewn wastefully on alien soil!

Do you now see to what levels of depravity you and your newfangled 'liberalism' have brought us? Milhauser has the Devil in him. What's more he's redder than a ruddy-cheeked [redacted] at a union rally. What's redder than a pied piper calling children from their beds? More than I hate [redacted], more than I hate boys in long pants, I hate red American writers and their god-awful neo-surrealism. Bah! Milhauser needs shooting in the thigh to get the demons out.



patrick mccabe, *mondo desperado*
oatmeal windy-day

This is a collection of several short dispatches from the gruesome mind of Patrick McCabe. All of these stories are set in Barntrosna, an Irish village home to an array of hopeless characters including a priest who accidentally ordained the Devil, a Kung-Fu fan who has Bruce Lee over for tea and a woman who dreams of killing her mother. McCabe's characters and the damp, grey world of Barntrosna are entirely miserable. The people here are horrible but pitiable, so there's plenty of pathos to go round. McCabe's speciality is black humour, and reading *Mondo Desperado* is kind of like watching slapstick: the guy stands on a rake, it pokes six holes in his forehead, he trips over. *Mondo Desperado's* hapless characters find themselves in situations so cruel they shouldn't be funny. But they are. As a reader you want things to turn out OK for these dweebs, but you wouldn't feel nearly so much sympathy for them if they didn't generally end up more unhappy than when they

started.

McCabe's meandering monologues can be long-winded but if you are a bit patient you'll be prepared to go with him to the weird places he wants to take you. While this book is fine as cracked light reading don't go expecting any more than that. You won't get it. This book doesn't demand much attention - it's kinda gross and occasionally heartwrenching and always on the side of freaks and losers. If you like small-town nutcases in ug-boots, McCabe's your man. The fake critical commentary will make you chortle for sure. Try this one from the 'The Essential Guide to Forgotten Cinema': "Thai Pop! Cantorock! Dope mules! Leopardskin-wearing Amazons! Not to be found here, I'm afraid. This book is about as 'mondo' as The Sound of Music!" Slightly cracked? Indeed.



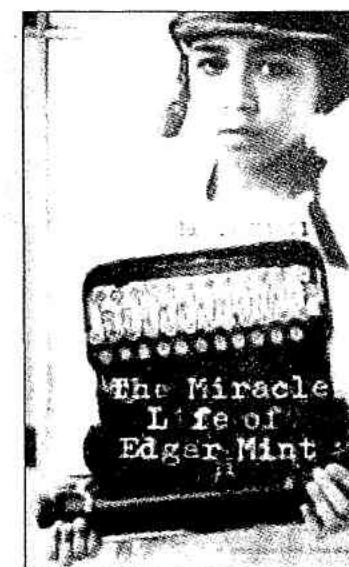
brady udall, *the miracle life of edgar mint*
amber beavis

To buy a book can be a very serious undertaking. I'm in earnest: it requires technique, and there are a number of established traditions within the art of book finding. There's the "I know that author" method, the "Harvill/Vintage/OUP ALWAYS publish good books" method or even the "isn't the cover pretty" method. However, a personal favorite is the "how about I read the first paragraph and see how I go with that" technique. Try this one with *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint*. Please. Because this is a novel which was written to have this method applied to it:

If I could tell you only one thing about my life it would be this: when I was seven years old the mailman ran over my head. As formative events go, nothing else comes close; my careening jigsaw existence, my wounded brain and faith in God, my collisions with joy and affliction, all of it has come, in one way or another, out of that moment on a summer morning when the left rear tire of a Unite States postal jeep ground my tiny head into the hot gravel of the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation.

See? Edgar Mint is an Apache-Indian boy living on a reserve. His mother has a dedicated relationship with whiskey.

His grandmother is a harridan. And yes, one day his head is run over by the mailman. He goes to hospital, where an over-zealous city doctor makes him into a project. Should he have survived or should he have died? In the end it really has nothing to do with him, and subsequently he exists in a within the confines of a coma for quite some time. Then he wakes up. He is the hospital miracle boy, their ray of hope, their success story. Fine, he does have some funny turns occasionally and he's unable to manipulate a pen (cue his endless typing on a battered Underwood in order to sustain his addiction to writing), but on the whole it counts as a recovery. There follows a Dickensian narrative of a boy in unusual circumstances: from his time in hospital and his use of a helmet to protect his battered head to his survival in the *Lord of the Flies*-esque reform school he attends to his adoption by a family of tormented Mormons. It's a novel which moves and succeeds because it is able to tell the story of a boy growing up without resorting to coming-of-age schmaltz or adolescent angst. A modern classic.



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heaven, tom tykwer
ricardo athisbum

Who is it aimed at: Anyone at all, between the ages of 14 and 60 who's happy to read a few subtitles, and enjoy an art-house thriller romance.

Who is it not aimed at: Ravers who saw Run Lola Run and misguidedly gather from the *Heaven* preview that this film also featured a pumping fast soundtrack, mixed with constant running and stunts.

What we think: *Heaven*, the only film worth getting out of bed for early in the morning. I'm not often in the habit of making it to a film at 11am on a Saturday morning, but this made it worth it.

Heaven is about Philippa (Cate Blanchett), an English ex-pat living in Italy, teaching English at a school. The opening shot is Philippa assembling a home-made bomb, then taking it to the destination: the office of a media mogul. We then follow the path of the bomb as it makes it's way out of the rubbish, and goes off to kill 4 innocent people (i.e. not the man she was trying to kill). We then cut to her arrest. It is here we learn about why she planted the bomb, and why she wanted to kill the media magnate. At the same time, poor Philippa learns of the innocents that were killed. But the best bit is that she is party to the knowledge that there is a drug dealing conspiracy that runs through the media company, and is fostered by the Cabinieri (the Italian equivalent of the AFP, except a lot meaner and better organised), who are of course destroying all evidence that may exonerate her from murder, and drop any

charges down to manslaughter.

While in custody, a young officer who is translating for her, Filippo (the boyish but sexy Giovanni Ribisi) falls in love, and helps her escape. They then go on a bit of a run through Italy, and slowly the relationship grows.

Now, what makes this film great is not the twists in the plot or the action - though it is an incredibly tense thriller - it's the great performances by Mr Ribisi and Ms Blanchett. Both of them speak incredibly well in their non-native tongue of Italian (both are English speaking actors), and still pull off entirely believable and personal explorations of characters who wish to be together, but who know they must pay for their transgressions.

Then we've got all the secondary characters, including the cherub-like younger brother of Filippo (Alessandro Sperduti), and the corrupt Maggiore of the Cabinieri (Mattia Sbragia). Each of these shine in their own way, working with what could only be considered an excellent but dense script (dense that is with metaphor and double meanings), written by the great Kristof Kieslowski.

The only problems with this movie are that it doesn't follow your usual Tom Tykwer style of suspense coupled with hard action, and is perhaps for some a little too emotional, and tacky sweet in places. It is, after all, a love story.



eight legged freaks, ellory elkaven
amber beavis

It was not until fairly recently that *Eight Legged Freaks* was granted an Australian release date. This appalled me. Why deprive Australian audiences of such a magnificent film. Could it be because none of our most excellent - and venomous - spiders made the final cut? Or is it merely because we are not deemed 'ready' for the talents of Mr Courtney Cox (aka David Arquette)? In any case, *Eight Legged Freaks* is now here...for three more days at the very least, and aren't we fortunate. Not since *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* have audience had the opportunity - nay, privilege - of enjoying this tale of giant mutant spiders gone bad and the trailer trash of Bible-belt America who are caught in the crossfire.

This is the story of a small town populated by small people. Small people, maybe, but with big hearts. When the heir to a mined out gold mine returns to town he gets the chance to catch up with old friends and old loves. Gladys is always happy to see him, just as we're always happy to see her with her emphatic cough and repulsive dog. And then there's the Sheriff who wears her uniform like a dominatrix. 'The returning son' and 'the sheriff' are delighted to catch up because, of course, she knows that he is the only man who really understood her. We join this quirky gang of in-

bred hillbillies after some toxic waste (oh of course!) is ingested by spiders that rapidly mutate until they're the size of tractors. Nice. Then we get to watch as over-sized jumping spiders pursue hoodlums on bikes, as male orb weavers gad about capturing townfolk as nuptial presents for their girl, and large tarantulas stalk the clean streets like Godzilla.

This film is funny, but not quite funny enough. Yeah, it's great watching trailer trash being massacred by a so called 'primitive' life-form - yet there's something fairly intrinsic missing. *Eight Legged Freaks* doesn't have the wit of such classics as *Planet of the Apes* or the retro value of *The Fly* to carry it through. And whilst the film-makers got the basics right and realised that spider blood is, in fact, green, they managed to engineer the critters in such a way that their poor little pedipalps were used as an extra pair of legs - a crazy idea when everyone knows that pedipalps are appendages used for courtship dances, weaving silk, eating and shagging. They're there for the fun times. Shame on the film makers for not doing their research.

The best thing about this film is the carnage, and even that isn't enough. Why so many annoying characters get to survive is beyond me. For true pathos, the geek kid should have gone first. Next time maybe?



goldmember (austin powers III), jay roach
andrei seeto

To pull off a third run of the same formula and jokes successfully in a film series/concept such as Austin Powers is a challenge. Mike Myers has managed to achieve this feat. With a small bag of cameos, the reuse of favourites introduced in the second film, i.e., Fat Bastard, and the addition of some more gross gags Austin Powers III, *Goldmember* stays afloat. The little plot that there is - and in general the less the better in this genre - manages to put quite a funny play on old devices. In *Goldmember*, Austin has to 'save' his absentee father who has been kidnapped by Dr Evil's new henchman, Johannes van der Smut, aka Goldmember. Time travel back to 70s disco is involved and Austin's and Dr Evil's youth is revealed in flash back too. Mini Me gets to act beyond his quite limited biting role from the last film, and Scott, Dr Evil's estranged son, takes an interesting turn.

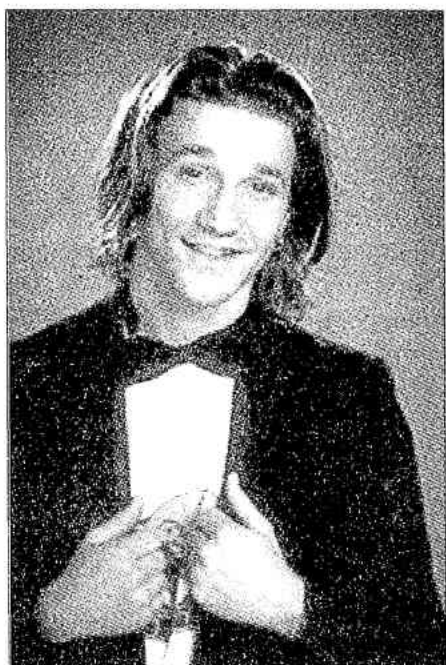
I have one big gripe with this film and that is what Mike Myers does to Fat Bastard at the end of the film. I won't say what exactly is involved, needless to say when you see the film you will understand. May I take this opportunity to say it's a FUCKING CRIME, it's sacrilege! You'll burn in hell Myers if you don't do something about it in the fourth Powers movie - and there will be one, of course - that's right Myers you better do the right thing or get yourself an asbestos suit because you're gonna fry! Aye!



what's hip now: the birkenstock phenomenon

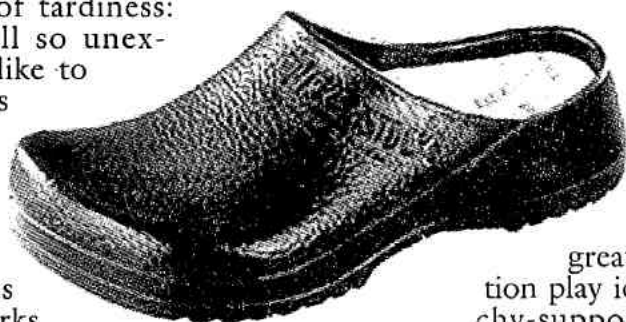
marla the tumour on: the shoe that knows where it's going

Once upon a time they were the preferred footwear of the errant greenie, the eccentric malaria expert and the sensible librarian. But then they became eligible as a health care rebate, chefs and nurses adopted them as workplace friendly footwear and so it was only a matter of time before they crossed over from being sturdy gardening shoes to the mainstay of streetwear aficionados across the world. Now they're a hip youth icon: that's right, Birks are the new Docs. Minus the goth cred, Birkenstocks have infiltrated the world of the hip. Bright young things no longer aspire to the footwear of the undead, instead preferring the rustic, webbed-feet look. Why?



(Above) "Thanks for taking a chance on an unknown kid". No, Travis Birkenstock. Thankyou.

Birkenstocks were assured of a place in youth culture on that immortal day that a visionary on the crew of the timeless classic *Clueless* (1995) paid homage to the shoe in the form of young Travis Birkenstock. Always cool, always cruisy, Master Birkenstock was the Birkenstock ethos personified in his immortal monologue on the nature of tardiness: "...this is all so unexpected. I'd like to thank the bus driver for taking a chance on an unknown kid". From this point on Birks



could make the move out from grandma's wardrobe and into the arena of bars, dancefloors, lecture halls and demonstrations with confidence.

But do they have the total and unqualified support of their constituents? Whilst many are happy with the performance of their Birks, not all consumers are content. A snapshot survey of Birkenstock owners standing in the coffee line this morning revealed that one in four Birkenstock wearers did carry concerns as to the durability of their footwear. The girl who ordered the cappuccino said that, "sure they're comfortable. Sure they're trendy. But do they provide everything I require in a shoe? Perhaps not. In fact, this pair I'm wearing remind me of my last boyfriend — sure they both seemed funky, but were they able to go the distance?" Likewise

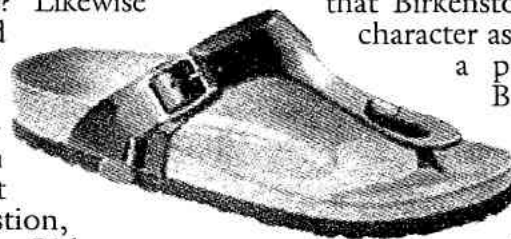
the boy behind the counter seemed opposed to the concept of brightly coloured clogs stating, "I can't believe you're wearing plastic shoes — that's a crime against humanity". In contrast, the boy ordering a short black defended the shoe in question, making the call that, "my Birks are always there for me" whilst a flat-white-drinking biology student commented that "I like them, they make my feet look bigger and this is seen as cool. In a society which has traditionally seen delicacy as a feminine virtue it's great to see a profit-making organisation play iconoclast, challenging the patriarchy-supported iconography of the 'little

woman'. Plus they come in super nice, pretty colours. It's a win-win situation".

The truth is that regardless of your belief in Birkenstock, there are perils to be circumnavigated should you decide that you wish to invest in a pair. They are addictive. It is not unknown of for consumers to start off buying 'just one' pair, only to be committed to lay-bys of up to five pairs within as many months.

Likewise, there is the misplaced notion that the canvas bag in which the shoes are packaged makes for a great deal. If you choose a pair of coloured clogs you may run the risk of being associated with a specific political belief, birks clog colour having taken up the baton

passed on to them by the Punk rocker tradition of shoelace colour affiliations. So be careful what colour you choose and do your research first — you may find yourself being invited to a parliament house schmoozing session with the young Liberals or a socialist pamphleteering run. The truth is that Birkenstocks are the ultimate character assessor. One glance at



a person's choice of Birkenstock and you can pretty much make an accurate judgement as to their clique, genre, degree and political affiliations. Best of all this means that you can use them to take the guess work out of deciding who to talk to at parties and who to avoid like...well, a pair of yesterday's shoes really. But on the less pretentious or cliquey side, an unusual make of Birkenstocks is guaranteed to break the ice at parties. There's nothing quite as lovely as seeing a pair of Birkenstock buddies meet for the first time. Shoes as social conduits — what could be more beautiful.

from the raving archives: drug paraphernalia and the law

fruity mac scoopage examines the controversial glow stick



The innocent glowstick is under fire from those perennial killjoys, the conservative camp. Once a symbol of PLUR (Peace Love Unity and Respect) — the raver's gut-wrenchingly sweet maxim — it is now a tool of the devil, propagated by the drug dealer who feeds hungry kandy kids and sends them to the ritualistic dance.

If you've been following the War on Drugs, you'll probably be aware of the RAVE Act, a neat-o acronym which stands for 'Reducing Americans' Vulnerability to Ecstasy' and is an attempt "To prohibit an individual from knowingly opening, maintaining, managing, controlling, renting, leasing, making available for use, or profiting from any place for the purpose of manufacturing, distributing, or using any controlled substance, and for other purposes." The Senate Bill 2633 is currently under consideration by Congress, and, if passed, will be an amendment of the Controlled Substances Act.

Basically, the Bush Administration has found that the 'crack house laws' of the eighties are futile in the prosecution of rave promoters and night club owners, and thus little help in targeting ecstasy, a

key offender in the War on Drugs. Although the War on Drugs has been eclipsed by the War on Terror of late, the two are inextricably linked, according to George W. Amongst the morass of moronic claims he has accumulated thus far through his term, there is the one that all drug users are terrorists, because if you use drugs, you are supporting drug traffickers from countries aligned to the Axis of Evil, mmmkay.

Equally moronic is the RAVE Bill, which has been slammed by civil-libertarians and kandy kids alike. Under the Act, the definition of a 'venue' can be any location, indoors or out, which is conducive to drug-taking. A venue can therefore range from a home to a warehouse to a night club. So how will officers of the law determine whether you have been encouraging the use of illicit substances in your venue? Glowsticks:

Congress' findings have stated that glowsticks and other rave toys are drug paraphernalia and are indicative of drug usage. Such paraphernalia includes:

"(A) neon glowsticks; (B) massage oils; (C) menthol nasal inhalers; and (D) pacifiers that are used to combat the involuntary teeth clenching associated with Ecstasy." Which is sold by rave promoters "to enhance the effects of the drugs that

patrons have ingested."

These rave accessories grew to prominence through the notorious 'crasher kids'. People, old enough to know better but too addled with MDMA to care, dressed as if characters from Rainbow Brite would ritually reach for the lasers at superclub Gatecrasher, of Sheffield, England. The phenomenon has spread globally, and America's enthusiastic rave scene has adopted it with particular gusto, (see 1999's Go or 2000's laughable Groove).

There are varied opinions on glowsticks and rave toys within the rave 'scene'. They are both revered as integral to the dancing experience and PLUR (ugh) and despised as trinkets of a culture which is now managed and exploited by corporations and overpaid DJs. However, the glowstick-toting, beaded kandy kid, irritating as s/he may be, means no harm, and perhaps if George Bush indulged in their poison on the odd occasion, the world would be a better place. PLUR.





prez sez:

Welcome back to the last term of 2002. I hope you all had a good break. Before you left for the mid-semester break, you may have voted in the Students' Association elections. I am pleased to extend my congratulations to Steve Michelson as the 2003 ANUSA President. Steve's Executive will include Dave Kelly (Vice-President), Christine Burke (General Secretary), Sarah Harte (Social Officer) and Soh Lip Ban (Treasurer). They are a great team and I am sure that they will serve the student body well next year.

However, much is still happening around the University and in the Students' Association. Over the holidays, the Constitution for the new NITA Students' Association was drafted. Much thanks must go to Victoria Lees, Secretary of the old NITA Students' Association and Katherine Owen, President of the School of Music Students' Association, for their help in this new initiative. The NITA Students' Association will be an autonomous sub-department of the

ANUSA, but will be headed by two Presidents, one from the School of Art and the other from the School of Music. The Executive will include a General Secretary and one representative from the School of Music/Art and ACAT. Elections for these new positions will be held in November. Following the Third Term General Meeting, the new NITA Co-Presidents will also hold positions on the Faculty Representative Council (FRC), Student Representative Council (SRC) and Combined Representative Council (CRC). I am most excited to be welcoming NITA into the representative bodies of ANUSA. I believe this marks a new stage of relationship between the main campus and NITA so that all ANU students can enjoy interaction with each other, regardless of their faculty. I hope the future brings more activities between ANUSA and the NITA Students' Association.

A proposal has recently gone to the faculties from the Students' Association suggesting the formation of a Transition Centre within each faculty. Such transition centres will have two main aims. The first will be to help first year students to adjust to academic life at the ANU. This includes sessions to help with essay/assignment skills, facilitation in forming study groups and help with other skills particular to a faculty. The second

limb to such Transition Centres will be training of staff to enable them to interact with students in lectures and tutorials. While the idea of such Transition Centres is still in an embryonic stage, the Review of Undergraduate Education has recommended the investigation of such centres. I hope that the ANU does take up the implementation of such centres as I believe there is a need for them. The Students' Association would hope that these Cenor experience personal difficulties that are affecting your studies, you need to apply for special consideration before you sit the exam. This may include special arrangements for the exam or it may include other factors being taken into account when grading your paper. Please keep a lookout for information pamphlets coming out from the Students' Association and if you need help in applying for such special consideration, contact myself on sa.president@anu.edu.au or Andrew Jory, the Education Officer on sa.education@anu.edu.au. We can also be contacted on 6125 8513 or 6125 2444.

I wish you all the best of luck for Term Four and as always, I look forward to seeing you around campus.

Joanne Yin
SA President
sa.president@anu.edu.au

readin', ritin', 'rithmetic



This term the Students' Association will be running two campaigns. First we will be running an education campaign about the rights of students at ANU. This will cover what you should expect in terms of your assessment, lectures and the total learning environment. It will also include information about how to get special consideration, appeals and how best to negotiate the bureaucratic system. The second campaign will be highlighting the problems with Brendan Nelson's higher education review and what impact it will have on you. This campaign is being co-ordinated by the Education Department and I would urge all students to support this initiative, as it will help the student voice to be heard.

Andrew Jory
SA Education Officer
Sa.education@student.anu.edu.au

your enviro collective loves you

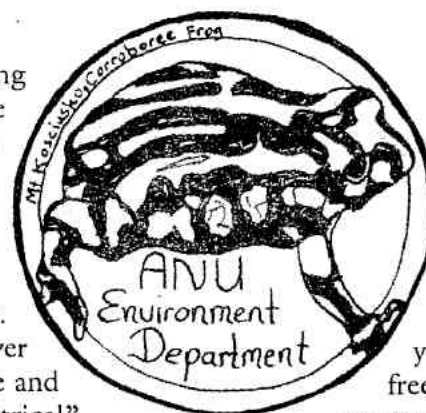
This month has been as tumultuousness as any other this year, if not more so. Last time we mentioned the prevailing SEAN meeting at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. This weekend was a great success of Student Environmental Activist Networking, thanks to the dedication and passion of all those involved. There were discussions about a trip to close the U.S. spy base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs, tips on how to avoid that infamous activist burnout, and a kickarse vegan chocolate fondue. Our hosts for the weekend graciously welcomed us with ceremony and song and tremendous thanks go out to all brothers and sisters at the Tent Embassy. May the sacred fire keep burning bright. The event also coincided with the National Forest Summit where heaps of activists discussed the best way to save old growth.

Speaking of which, recently there have been a couple of very successful actions to quell the proposed charcoal plant at Mogo State Forest, on the South Coast. The past few weeks have seen crew campaigning at both Cooma and Bateman's Bay. Cooma was host to an ALP meeting and we went out there and made those hicks think a bit — we hope! We really were very nice! And last weekend there was a convergence of over five thousand people walking from the bridge in Bateman's Bay. They showed their

disgust at the thought of having a beautiful bit of the Nature Coast smogged up, smelling like burning old socks and looking like a desolate wasteland, thanks to an outdated and economically un-viable approach to a dying industry. Some of the finest performers ever to grace this campus did a fine and fitting rendition of "Tree-actrical" which highlighted the hypocrisy and greed of some of the politicians and business men and women involved in the sorry charcoal saga. The play also gives a much-needed voice to the plight of endangered species that live in the area, such as the extraordinarily beautiful and cheeky Spotted Tiger Quoll.

NEWS JUST IN — they (the powers that be) have "shelved" the planned charcoal factory, for the time being. It WILL NOT be on the South Coast. YAY!!!! There is rumour along the grapevines that they want it in East Gippsland — back to the forest everyone! We'll keep you all informed, come out to beautiful East Gipps and see our play.

Once again we urge you to come in and visit us to pick your free computer (yes really truly!) and to get involved in one or all of the many campaigns we have got our dirty mitts into. Meetings are on at Tuesday 6:30



and you get dinner for free, if you turn up at 5 o'clock, you get a free yoga lesson too. This collective would love to have more involvement from the wider university populace; sometimes we worry that we turn people off because they think we're strange. But if you think we look like freaks and act like freaks it doesn't necessarily mean we are dangerous freaks.

You can join our new email lists — enviro.collective.announce@anu.edu.au OR enviro.collective.discuss@anu.edu.au OR just so one — not 342 people get it — email Dan on enviro.collective@student.anu.edu.au — you can tell him anything.

Tarquin (in lieu of Dan(iel) MacKinlay)
SA Enviro Officer
enviro.collective@student.anu.edu.au

ambition
passion
bbq experts
jumping castles
intrigue
office politics
scandal
self absorbed
integrity
cv padding
lazy
vanilla coke
debating society
hacks
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cunninglinguist

At the business end of the term, we often like to think of how we'd like to spend our generous undergraduate holiday and most importantly, how we're going to finance it. Well, before you start planning your perfect time out activity, remember **TERM IS NOT OVER**. In the Women's Department we still have campaigns to run and need your help to make them successful.

October 25th is Reclaim the Night, the annual march and event to raise awareness of physical and sexual violence against women. We'll be marching from Uni in the afternoon, carrying placards, into Garema place, where there'll be performances by women's groups and individuals, college students, mothers, daughters etc. Information stalls for various community groups, such as Family Planning ACT, Domestic Violence Crisis Service and heaps of others will be there too. The march will start a little after 6pm and you can get a copy of the route from the department. After that, there is a young women's film festival being run on the screen above the chess board, so hang around and see the talent. It is of vital importance to have a big undergraduate contingent at the event, to highlight that things aren't all peachy on campus either. If you want to get involved (you know you do) contact the office or drop by a collective meeting, details at the bottom.

Work has begun to expand and generally improve the Rapunzel Room (women's space) and the wall was knocked out this month (finally!). Soon there'll be new carpet, sink, lights and all manner of necessities to create a safe and appropriate space for women to gather, organise and base themselves on campus. If you have anything you would like to contribute to the room, or have any ideas, you can get hold of any collective member via e-mail, or contact Women on Campus, who administer the room.

Lastly, congratulations to Trish Gray, the new Women's Officer for 2003. As the collective endorsed candidate I'm sure she'll be more than capable of facilitating a vibrant, diverse and effective collective next year.

Collective Meetings are now held on Wednesday's at 12pm and Friday's at 10am - so you can make either time. We especially need placard painters and badge makers, so get your activist skills into gear and come along.

Nadia Docrat
SA Women's Officer
sa.womens@anu.edu.au

queer as fuck

Well, spring has finally sprung and we all know what that means — birds, bees, sex... Remember, the Sexuality Department provides FREE condoms, lube and dams! Just walk in the front door of the Students' Association building and there should be a bowl full of safe sex goodies on your left. And no, you don't have to be queer to take them.

Anyway, fourth term is here and as per usual it brings with it the dreaded combination of essay due dates, final exams and (my personal favourite) thesis deadlines. But don't worry, there are still plenty of things going on in the queer community for you to get involved in and procrastinate to your heart's content.

In early November, there is the Sixth International Gay & Lesbian Games happening up in Sydney, with a range of sporting (athletics, swimming), cultural (qwires etc) and 'social' (no

prizes for guessing what that means) events.

Immediately following that, Canberra will be hosting its own smaller but much friendlier version of Mardi Gras — the fourth annual 'Spring Out' festival. Some of the highlights of the program include a community Fair Day followed by the traditional Bush Dance (both on Saturday November 16th), Spring Lit, a queer writers festival, on that Sunday and Queer Screen — with gay and lesbian-themed shorts and features — the next weekend (November 23rd and 24th). For more info on what is happening you can visit the Spring Out website at www.springout.webone.com.au.

Of course, the Sexuality Department is still (just) functioning, so keep your eye out on the jellybabies egroup to find out when the fourth term meetings will be held. Also, if you are hav-

ing problems related to your sexuality, have experienced discrimination or harassment or just want someone to talk to about 'stuff' in general, then the Sexuality Department is an important information and referral resource. You can contact the Department on phone 61258514, via email at sexdep@student.anu.edu.au or drop into the office in the Students, Association.

Otherwise, there should be a couple of jellybabies events to look forward to in the near future, not to mention the beautiful Canberra spring weather.

Good luck with the exams.

Cheers,

Alastair Lawrie
SA Sexuality Officer
sexdep@student.anu.edu.au

get a life

Hi! I was going to write a piece on how much I love daytime TV, but figured time would be better used in the watching of daytime TV. Vanilla coke is almost here! Things are on the up!



Love and hugs
Dana Quick xx
SA Social Officer
sa.social@anu.edu.au

We would like to congratulate social officer Dana Quick, for winning the "Most token office bearer report of the year" award. We love daytime TV too. Honourable mention must go to gen sec Tom O'Callaghan, who came a close second. Onya tigers.

office politics

It's almost the end of the year, and there are still a few SA meetings to get through before the year's out. Coming up sometime soon will be the General Meeting for this term. O-week directors will be elected at this meeting — so if you're interested, turn up, or email me for more info: sa.gensec@anu.edu.au.

Good Luck with your exams that are coming up — check out when they are on timetable.anu.edu.au

Not much else happening — too busy with assignments now — for any more news, see the next *Woroni*...

Tom O'Callaghan
SA General Secretary
sa.gensec@anu.edu.au

Graeme Andrews
 Ged Sheehouse
 Peter McPhillips
 Michelle Karacott
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GW Bush to send Dr Phil to resolve Middle East crisis



Pious XVI, Buggery College, and Brent Hall announce GAFF agreement.

Bob Ajob

The three largest catered Colleges at the New Zealand National University have signed the General Agreement on Fucking Freshers treaty. The agreement reduces many of the restrictions on inter-college fresher fucking, making Wally Road a free trade zone. The terms and conditions of the treaty were finalized on July 4th at the ODLID trade talks just in time for the all-important NZNU Ball's season. Buggery College President Richard said, "This day will be to Wally Road like Independence day is to the United States it will be

celebrated vigorously every 4th July'. Pious XVI and Buggery College immediately ratified the agreement, however, Brent Hall is still undecided. According to their president Chooka Bazza, "Yeh we want to be involved in the community but we also want people to see that Brent Hall is a new-age, trendy, college without any baggage". Brent Hall seems set to place a small subsidy at the door to restrict Fresher fucking. Social Officer Robbo Biffo said, "Its not really protectionism we just intend to subsidize closed parties at out our college for our freshers once a month."

Toga Parties (COTP), The Convention on Sheep exchange, and the General Agreement on Not Telling the Police (GANTP)'.

According to Jock from Pious XVI, "Usually we had to restrict our sexual exploitation to within these four walls but now with this agreement we've got many more options." Nancy a 1st Year Buggery student said, "I've been looking over the fences to Pious XVI and Brent Hall for the last 6 months. I can't wait for this agreement to come into force I'm going to leap over the fence'.

Not all the Colleges were invited to join the agreement raising issues about the nature of the inter-

hall community. Bogan and Feral Hall stated that, "We didn't really want to be invited. As non-catered we were more concerned about the free-trade of meals agreement that some Colleges have. It's not like we've been welcomed into that community anyway. Last year

Blocka Big Fella from Buggery called us all a bunch of 'monkey fuckers' I just don't think our relations are healthy."

According to Pious XVI president Bazza Biffo, the

Nurses Catholic College were omitted from the Treaty because they lacked, "...the resources to contribute to the inter-hall community'.



(Above) Bazza, Chooka, and Biffo celebrate the end of trade talks.



Helen Cross Speaks Out, "Who am I? What am I doing here?"

Gillian Tidwinkle

Helen Cross has spoken out about her expulsion from the Liberal party claiming she knew nothing about the 328.6 point document produced by Gary Humphries documenting her failures as a back-bencher.

When asked about her failure to attend Legislative Assembly meetings Cross said, "What legislative assembly...meetings...oh dear. Was that part of my job? I thought I was just meant to visit Anglican high schools and attend business lunches."

Cross responded to claims that her removal was a backlash to the abortion vote by asking, "There's an abortion vote? Is this at that Assembly? I wonder which way I'm going to vote? I'll have to think about it and get back to you as soon as I can, I promise."

Despite being ousted from the Liberal Party, Cross has been welcomed into the ACT's newest

emerging party featuring Roslyn Dundas and Kerry Tucker - The Groovy Chicks party. Dundas said, "Look I'm sure Helen can fit right in. Our party isn't tied down by ideology or politics, it's just young, fresh and groovy. She'd really add to our girl power platform. With

She is soooo much fun."

Yesterday Hysen Green Hospital stated that mental health was not really a good reason for excluding someone from the legislative assembly. According to Hospital Principal Dr Simonson, "Many MLA's have been at our facility before. In our view, Helen's one of the more stable ones. Also while I'm on national TV can I just say, Gary if you're out there, please please come back soon. There are people here who love and care for you and really want to help. Please Gary, it's for your own good."

The recent expulsion of Mrs Cross has reinvigorated the calls for changes to the ACT electoral system. One of the leading proposals being considered by the ACT electoral commission is to have the candidates chosen by drawing lots rather than through actual votes. The Commission's research indicates that in the ACT, "randomising the electoral process will lead to better candidates, better government, and less

'groovy chick' parties."

For further information on the ACT system of government try to avoid ringing your MLA, they're probably more confused than you are.

(Below) Humphries is also confused.



(Above) A very confused Helen Cross.

Helen on board, we'd be two short of calling ourselves the Spice Girls. Now that's feminism." In response to claims from reporters that Kerry Tucker was, in fact, not that young, Dundas said, "Leave Kerry alone. She is like, so cool and you just have to get to know her and stuff.



'Revisionist' Historian: "Whites: 2,456,798. Blacks: 26. It's A Draw!"

Keith Shuttlecock

The evidence for the so-called "aboriginal massacres" should be a purely historical question, without ideological complications. So it is dreadful that dozens of otherwise well-respected Australian academics have engaged, over a period of decades, in a leftist conspiracy to discredit myself, Padraic McGuinness, Frank Devine, "Quadrant", "The Daily Telegraph" and the Howard government. It is time I gunned them down.

The black-armband fabricators claim that at least 20,000 aborigines were murdered by white settlers during contact, invasion and settlement. But as I demonstrated in my "The Killing of the History of Killing", the original sources reveal that the vast majority of soi-disant "massacre-victims" were dispersed, shot while trying to escape, killed in freak hunting accidents or abducted by bunyips. When lawfully detained by the Queensland Native Police, aborigines seemed to have felt compelled (either by their barbaric customs or their guilty consciences) to strangle, dismember and cremate themselves, a practice which Jo Bjelke Peterson found himself unable to stop. To spot the lefties' fabrications, you

only have to read their latest "evidence", "The Confidential Diary of Colonel 'Man-eater' Blood, Esq.", a curious volume, bound in the toughest brown velum and written with a flowing hand in red ink. That posing mythographer Prof. Henry Reynolds claims that Colonel Blood, a Presbyterian elder, was "a deviant monster and a psychopathic serial-killer". According to Reynolds, this picaresque description of a colonial booze up has a sinister subtext: "Tues. 4th March, 1837: Polished off twenty gins in the back paddock with Gattling." Reynolds finds the most murderous implications in innocuous sentences like "three native boys made a lovely lunch", "had some blacks for dinner" and "piccaninnies did not take to marinade". The professor is shocked by Blood's robust, colonial humour: "Good hunting: 3 kangaroos, 5 possums, 3 cockatoos, 12 beaters." Frankly, I think Henry has massacres on the mind.

The figure of 20,000 dead was arrived at by the most questionable means. Some historians rely on Aboriginal oral history, or "the tales my granny told me", but ignore the evidence of the

seventeen million descendants of white settlers, most of whom have never heard of the "massacres". Some historians claim, without evidence, that there were around ten undocumented deaths among the aborigines for every recorded death among the colonists. But this ignores the fact that the aborigines were past-masters of guerrilla warfare, with sharp teeth, who had been practising homeland defence for tens of thousands of years. I am inclined to agree with my friend Paddy that there was in fact a "dead tie", with at least as many whites and bullocks killed as blacks.

To stop us from making these mistakes in the future, I would like to propose a new principle of historical method called the "Not Proven (or Maximum Deniability) Principle". As one controversial English historian has put it, "Unless you know something actually happened, actually, actually, beyond any doubt whatsoever, like you were there, you shouldn't say that it hap-



(Above) Keith says, "These ones seem perfectly happy".

pened, especially if you might cast aspersions on someone who can't defend himself, say because he died in a bunker at the end of the War." Now I'm not a crank, and I wouldn't deny the Holocaust, at least not in Germany, but before we accept that genocide occurred we need signed confessions corroborated by unequivocal forensic evidence. The disappearance of an entire race is not enough.

Keith Shuttlecock was an obscure academic, before he discovered a historical thesis which perfectly conformed with the reactionary politics of the Howard government. He hasn't looked back since.

US Network to Launch 'Slavery' Reality TV Program.

Gillian Tidwinkle

In response to the success of the BBC's Edwardian reality TV program, the ABC in America is launching a new show. Network executives stated that, "The BBC's program demonstrated that reality TV is not just for white trash. Rather, if you create a program about rich people pretending to be rich fascist people from another century, then rich people will get just as much out of reality TV."

The American executives are planning to set their new program on an 18th Century plantation in the United States. According to the executive, "The program will take you back to those great times in American History... those large southern houses, southern manners, and of course, the slaves."

The executives had considerable problems acquiring volunteers to appear on the program. As CEO Mr Jimbob said, "Initially the only people that wanted to apply were 80 year old ex-klan members. They weren't quite what we were looking for. Also many of them weren't interested when we stated that we wouldn't be able to replicate exactly all aspects of slavery due to legality." US President GW Bush initially applied for the program, however, Dick Cheney rectified this indiscretion when he returned from his weekend away. Eventually the executives were able to find a keen group of volunteers from Alabama.

According to Jimbob, "There was also a shortage of volunteers to be slaves. After we excluded all the individuals who had been convicted of sex offences, we were left

with nothing. We just didn't get the response from the African-American community we expected." After being denied special permission from the Department of Justice to import Africans through the dwindling but still viable global slave trade, the network has decided that they will use illegal Mexican immigrants to play the slaves. Mr Jimbob stated, "It takes away from the realism a little but were willing to settle for Mexicans — at least they're not white."

The program is expected to attract a viewing audience of aging southerners, Klan members, and Big Brother's core constituency of really really stupid people.

Mr Jimbob is concerned about legal issues. Recently, the Edwardian reproduction on the BBC ran into trouble when social services removed the contestants' children from the program. According to British social services, "You think alcohol and drug abuse lead to bad parenting. That's nothing. Imagine pulling an 8 year old kid out of school putting them on a national television program and then telling them that they are living in a different century despite the presence of TV cameras. That's some really freaky shit. And then you punish the kid for not pretending they are living in a different century. We just couldn't tolerate it."

Furthermore, infamous American attorney Edward Fagan who has recently sued the companies that profited off slavery, plans to launch a law suit against the network. Ac-



(Above) One of the rejected applicants speaks to reporters.

ording to Fagan, "I'm usually averse to launching actions relating to crimes committed in this century. I consider myself a kind of pre-1945 civil litigant special-



(Above) This whole family are headed for fun and adventure in the United States.

ist. But I really feel that the families of the slave owners have the right to all of the networks profits, minus my one-third"

this article has been censored...

This was a satirical piece on a counselling service in the Middle East. It was censored on the grounds that it was racist.

The editors of *Woroni* maintain that this was a balanced piece of satire which was not racist in either intent or effect. We believe that articles should not be censored merely because the Directors of Student Publications don't find them funny.

Miranda Tetlow, Lexi Methereil, Merryn Spencer and Amber Beavis (Co-Editors of *Woroni*)



are you puzzled? perplexed? do you look at your life and feel dwarfed by the enormity of your ignorance? well **dear darwin**, *woroni's* very own evolutionary agony aunt is here to help you answer those big questions. all you have to do is ask.

Dear Darwin,

I think I'm depressed. I feel sad. What can I do? I've started crying into my cooking and my housemates said they'd veto me from the kitchen if I didn't stop because they're watching their sodium levels. Dear Darwin, please help me.

Simone

Dear Simone,

Some — when faced with a case of depression — like to prescribe a number of very good methods of managing your moods. A reassessment of your lifestyle, counselling or the option of medication are all excellent options to consider BUT...these are not the only answers, Simone! Have you ever noticed how a large proportion of history's geniuses were also depressives. Sylvia Plath, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Virginia Woolf and even your very own namesake Simone de Beauvoir. The stats are clear — depression and genius often go hand in hand. Now I wouldn't go jumping to conclusions just yet, nor go booking that flight to the Nobel Prize awards cer-

emony either, but there's a very real possibility that you could be, well, brilliant. And admit it, that's enough to make anyone's ego take wings and soar free, free as a bird.



Apart from this there are a number of hot topics floating around at the moment. It has been hypothesised, for example, that depression might just be associated with genetic traits that offer some **selective advantage**. One study by Professor Nancy Andreasen, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Iowa, found that 80% of the faculty at the prestigious Iowa Writer's Workshop had suffered from some form of depression at some point in their lives. It has been theorised that an aptitude for creative and breakthrough thinking may in fact be associated with a number of mental health disorders which have been shown to have a **genetic basis**. So you go Simone! Your low mood, crying bouts and insomnia could just show that in evolutionary terms you're ahead of the pack.

But this is not the only option. While I'm not suggesting that the spark of genius is deficient in you, Simone, it has also been suggested that depression might be a mechanism which regulates

evolved social interactions. John Hartung — an evolutionary biologist at the State University of New York has suggested that depression occurs more frequently in intelligent people who exist lower in their work hierarchy, namely, those who might just be a threat to their superiors. Hartung suggests that depression might be an evolved survival mechanism — or even a social strategy — which prevents a low-status member of a social group from attracting a pre-emptive strike from the alpha male/ female. Within species where social interactions are an essential component of winning out in the contributions to the next generation stakes, any trait which protected a potential alpha-male/ female from attack during their stint lower down in the social rankings would be favoured by natural selection when they were able to come to power later in life. The fact of the matter, Simone, is that the socially adept are sexy but permanently stifled potential will put a dampener on things. It is hypothesised that depression is an evolved social-strategy which allows the brilliant amongst us time to consolidate and metamorphose into what we might be. It gives such people the time and opportunity to exist within a society clearly beneath us and to assume leadership when we're up to it. So just bide your time and the world will come to you, trust me!

Dear Darwin,

I think I've lost my sense of self. I used to be original, witty and full of creative catchphrases. Now I'm merely a pastiche of other people's personalities and habits. Like the other week I read a phrase in *Woroni*: "fuck off and die". Since then I've been using it incessantly and uncontrollably. It just seems to fit every possible scenario. I told the bogan guys who yelled at me from their car this morning to "fuck off and die". I told the local Mormons to "fuck off and die". I even told the ANU parking inspector to "fuck off and die". It's getting me into a lot of trouble. I can't afford it any more, Dear Darwin, and it's embarrassing because it isn't limited to just this phrase. What can I do?

Please don't fuck off and die,

Pete Re

Dear Mr Re (or may I call you Pete?),

This is a common problem — you're not alone and you're not to blame. Sometimes there are certain phrases, songs, poems that you **just can't get out of your head** (Kylie, 2001). When this happens you should just **deny, deny, deny** (Bill Clinton, 1999) — but sometimes it's just not as easy as **one, two, three or even a, b, c** (The Jackson Five, 1973). You've just got to **keep it real** (Ali G, 2002), **get with the program** (Oprah, 1995) and...oh for god's sake! You've just got to remember that sometimes there's nothing you can do about this problem. No matter what you do.

Some of you readers out there will know what I'm talking about — it's called a **meme**. A meme is a **unit of cultural inheritance**. It's a little like a **gene**. A gene is a **unit of inheritance** which is **replicated** and copied from **parent to offspring**, through the generations. Similarly, a meme is anything that can replicate itself from brain to brain — generally by virtue of its 'catchiness'. As I said, a meme can be a song, a poem, a turn of phrase.



It's anything that spreads by imitation. The more catchy the meme, the further it spreads and the better it sticks. Memes can vary from the cute to the inane. On the cute end we have European Blue Tits pecking through the lids of milk bottles left on the front step of British homes in order to get themselves a fine feed. In the 1940's James Fisher and Robert Hinde were able to track and document the spread of this 'habit' from when it was occurring in just a few birds right through to this being a widespread occurrence. On the inane end we have the pop princess, Ms. Minogue and her classic celebration of the meme, "I Just Can't Get You Out of My Head". There is light at the end of the tunnel though. The appeal of memes fade and sooner or later most will reach the end of their natural life — in Kylie's case this was when the public at large came to the conclusion that her song should just **fuck off and die**. Damn. You've obviously just come across a very nice meme and now you've broadcast it so that many people will catch it and pass it on in their turn too. There is no escape so why not just embrace it? Soon so many people will be in on this particular meme that any social embarrassment will fade into distant memory.

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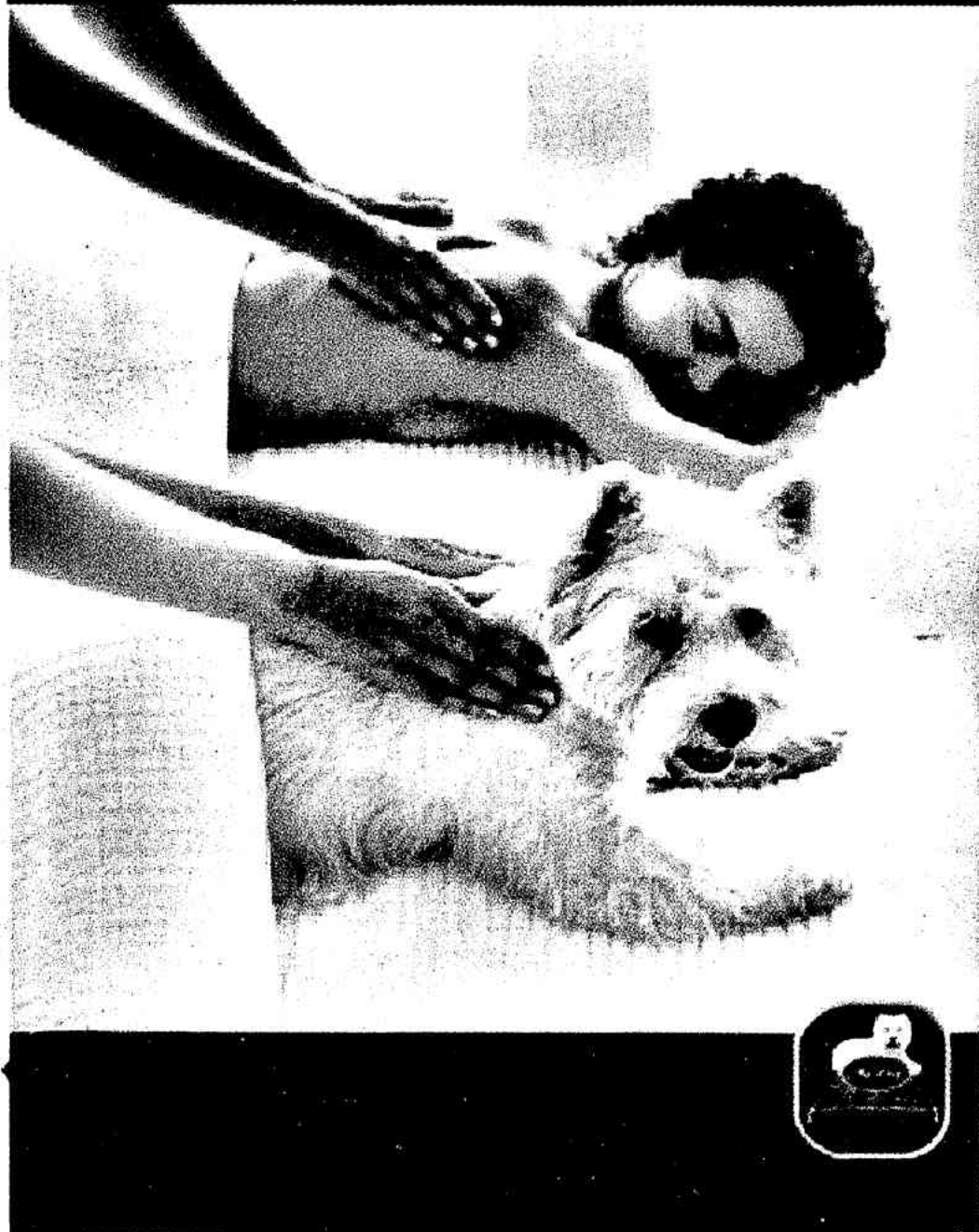
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